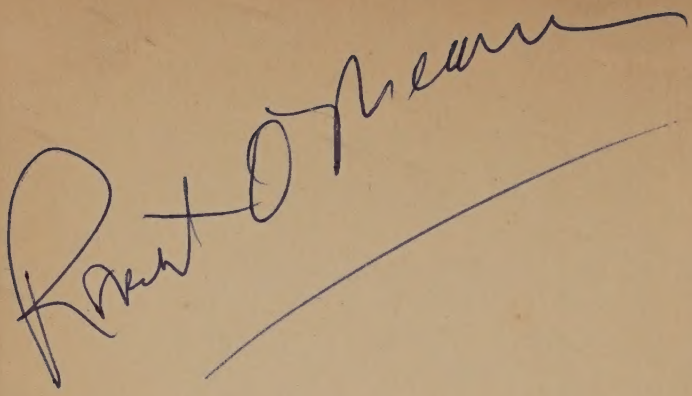
# THE NEW PREACHING

JOSEPH FORT NEWTON



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# THE NEW PREACHING

A LITTLE BOOK ABOUT
A GREAT ART

# THE NEW PREACHING

## *A LITTLE BOOK ABOUT A GREAT ART*

BY

JOSEPH FORT NEWTON, LL.D.

AUTHOR OF "PREACHING IN LONDON," "GOD AND THE GOLDEN RULE," "ALTAR STAIRS," ETC.

"Tell me, I pray thee, where is the house of the seer?"
(1 Sam. 9: 18.)

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*To*

A. MAUDE ROYDEN

MY COLLEAGUE AT THE CITY TEMPLE
IN DAYS OF WAR AND REACTION
ONE OF THE GREATEST OF
THE NEW PREACHERS

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# IN THE VESTRY

# IN THE VESTRY

> For the pulpit is ever earth's foremost part; all the rest comes in its rear; the pulpit leads the world. From thence it is that the storm of God's quick wrath is first descried, and the bow must bear the earliest brunt. From thence it is that the God of breezes fair or foul is first invoked for favorable winds. Yes, the world's a ship on its passage out, not a voyage complete; and the pulpit is the prow.—*Herman Melville, "Moby Dick."*

SOME time ago a literary journal asked me to write an article to be entitled, "What Has Taken the Pull Out of the Pulpit?" After some diplomatic negotiations it was agreed that perhaps a better title might be found, one a little less provoking. When I ventured to suggest that it be called "The New Preaching," the editor was not interested, except to know if there is such a thing as a new preaching, and if so, what is it like and who are the new preachers? Is it new in its message, or merely in its method, or in both, and what are the signs of its appearing?

My qualifications for discussing such a theme are few indeed; none, in fact, save a love of preaching, an abiding faith in its efficacy, and a desire to awaken a new sense of the worth and

wonder of our preacher-craft. It so happens that I have heard a great deal of preaching, in America and in England, and it has been at once a privilege and a joy. On both sides of the sea I have heard many kinds of preaching, good and bad, thrilling and ineffective; not much preaching in the older and more stately style, with polished phrases and an elaborate homiletic; some pretty, perfumed preaching, as if decorating a candied Christianity; some slangy, sloppy preaching; much virile, forceful, interesting preaching, topical, journalistic, often very striking, and at times picturesque; very little expository preaching, as in the days of Parker, Maclaren, and Dale; too much catch-penny preaching, dealing with topics of the day in a flashy, sensational fashion; a great deal of wholesome, inspiring, edifying preaching, good to hear and heed; and now and then the haunting notes of a new preaching, of which I am to write, if only tentatively and as a novice, though my audacity in attempting to do so fills me with consternation.

At any rate, my experience as a listener has taught me a new understanding of the men at both ends of the sermon, the man in the pulpit and the man in the pew. Also, it has deepened

and made more vivid my conviction of the divine origin and permanent necessity of the high office and art of the preacher, to celebrate which is my solitary purpose and passion. There are many who hold that preaching has suffered a distinct decline within the last decade, not so much in the quality of its sermons as in the art, or lack of art, with which they are preached. Others insist that the pulpit has lost its bearings, and that from its message, no less than from its manner, the note of assurance and the thrill of momentousness have died out, leaving the instinct of evangelic persuasion in abeyance, if not lost beyond recovery.

In so far as these impressions are justified—and one does miss in the preaching of to-day the urgency of appeal, as of a herald telling tidings, as well as the quality of unction so notable in former times—it may be due alike to pulpit and people, and to the conditions under which they live. The voices of the age call men away from the inner life; psychology seems to dissolve it into mist and dream; and men are imperceptibly led to neglect its laws and disciplines. Our life is cluttered with mere things; our literature gives us little more than passing, cloudy thoughts on eternal realities.

The faith of many has been shaken, if not shattered, by swift changes of thought, by the widening horizons of knowledge, or by the hurried indifference of the world. Often, alas, the preacher himself loses what in radio we call "contact" and tries in vain to make up in "pep" what is lacking in prophecy; and the great succession is broken and lost.

In these despites, the high, ineffable office of the preacher endures, as valid to-day as at any time in the past, and its power will not die while human nature is the same. There are sermons that live for ages, made immortal by the faith of the preacher, the depth of his heart, the clarity of his vision, and the magic of his art. Some of the sermons of Chrysostom are as fresh to-day as when they fell from his lips, and certain notes from the Middle Ages stir us strangely, in spite of all our wise and witty lore. True preaching is helped, not hurt, by lengthening vistas of knowledge and the setting back of the skyline. Lifting skies of outlook only make the old issues more acute and the sharp questions more poignant. Who shall say that in our day of need a new birth of an ancient and holy art is impossible; that the Life of the Spirit has spent itself and may

not achieve new and more perfect forms; that the Eternal Evangel may not be preached with a new grace and power for the healing of human hearts, for the health of the nations, for the coming of an abiding peace, for the realization of God by the love and service of man.

Like the men in "Moby Dick" who listened to the sermon by Father Mapple, we too are sailors, afloat but not adrift, upon the waters that flow about the universe, swept by the Winds of the Spirit which blow where they list, but do not run at random. We go trusting, God willing, that good seamanship and a wise Pilot shall win to some undiscovered shore of human good. What though some ancient landmarks fade from view; other and more splendid guiding peaks will rise to sight. Always our quest is for the liberty of faith, the fellowship of the love of Christ, the fraternity of righteousness, the redemption of man from solitariness and selfishness in a Beloved Community—and our voyaging is not in vain.

# THE SERMON

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# THE SERMON

My preaching almost always displeases me. For I am eager after something better, of which I often have an inward enjoyment before I set about expressing my thoughts in audible words. Then, when I have failed to utter my meaning as clearly as I have conceived it, I am disappointed that my tongue is incapable of doing justice to that which is in my heart. What I myself understand I wish my hearers to understand as fully; and I feel that I am not so speaking as to effect this. The chief reason is that the conception lights up the mind with a kind of rapid flash; whereas the utterance is slow, lagging, and far unlike the thing it would convey.—*St. Augustine.*

LUCUS VAN LEYDEN, an early Dutch artist, has a striking little painting entitled "The Sermon," which is at once a picture and a parable of the preaching office. The intent of the artist has been a topic of debate, since it is hardly possible that he selected the sermon-hour in church merely to display a group of portraits, as that would betray a callousness in respect to sacred things. No, either he meant to portray the plight of the preacher in his day, or else the attitude of the church toward the sermon, as counting for nothing, or for very little; the service being everything

—and of that, chiefly the one act by the priest. At any rate, as has been many times made plain, if the Church treats the pulpit with contempt, it is sure to have a contemptible pulpit.

The painting shows us a large church or cathedral, with its pillars and arches, its somber interior in contrast with the bright, sunny world outside, where the tide of events flows by. In the background, far withdrawn, one sees dimly the sanctuary and the high altar, unattended, as if preaching and worship were divorced. In front of the church, in the courtyard, a well-dressed man is distributing food to the sick and needy. Did the artist feel that the Church of his day was remote from the people, out of touch with their bitter struggle for bread, forgetting that while man cannot live by bread alone, yet he must have bread for the body as well as for the soul? Often one feels that it is the other way round in our day, when the Church is so involved in the life of the world that it has no Bread of God for man.

In the foreground is the nave; there is a service in progress, and it is sermon-time. A thin, ascetic priest is bending over the pulpit, with his hands outstretched, preaching very earnestly to a congregation of twenty or thirty, who

are arranged in groups; some standing, a few sitting on chairs or stools. It is a languid congregation, not one of whom is looking at the preacher, or apparently paying any attention to what he is saying, except, perhaps, a few sturdy citizens, one of whom is the artist himself, who are half-listening. The pulpit is an odd affair, just large enough to hold the preacher, and he is slight of figure. Is it a symbol of the narrow restraint imposed upon the pulpit of that day, limiting its teaching to harmless homilies on unearthly things, forcing it to deal with ancient dogmas, or else lose itself in fine-spun mysticism which floated like a mist over the heads of the people, and never with living issues of the day? Or had the pulpit itself retreated into the past and become a mere echo of a faith no longer vital? One can hardly think so, because the preacher is so passionately in earnest. Yet something has removed the preacher from his people, either his fault or their indifference—his figure seems smaller than his hearers, as if he were some way off.

The pulpit is raised a good many feet from the ground by an inadequate stem, like a tub on top of a peg, reached by a rickety ladder with rungs rather far apart—it must have been

quite a feat for the preacher to enter it. But the physical handicaps under which the preacher is laboring are as nothing in comparison with the spiritual difficulties which beset him. Men, women, and little children are facing every direction but toward the pulpit; all are looking out of the picture at the spectator—all, except the preacher. There are several mothers with babies, and one or two Sisters wearing the big white hoods of an order of nuns. One old lady, with a queer little owlet on her headdress, is deep in sleep, her hands folded. Another woman, with what looks like a huge bluebottle in her headgear, is dozing quietly. The gesture and expression of the preacher show that he is speaking of things which are realities to him, seeking to share with his hearers the secrets of his soul; yet no one is so much as looking at him. "The hungry sheep look up and are not fed," cried Milton; but the people in this picture do not look up.

Yet the people are there, as they are in our churches, or many or few; some from force of habit, others as a tiresome duty or an act of condescension; and still others, it may be, drawn by some nameless need, seeking what they have been unable to find in any satisfying

quantity or quality in life. The sheer marvel of it passes the power of words to describe, if one has eyes to see. Folk of many families, walking many scattered ways—their faces like glimpses of a landscape in the mist, suggesting hidden hills and vales—gather about a pulpit, like doves at the prophet's window. He is a strange man, and no preacher at all, who is not touched with wonder and awe by a company of human souls, knowing the work of God in each lonely heart—a work always going on, always important, as various as the infinite varieties of lives, as urgent as their need, as continuing as night and day. He may not know them, and yet if he looks into his own heart he knows them all, for are they not his kith and kin, with hopes and fears and faiths like his own? They are there to be awakened to awareness of the spiritual world; there to be led and lifted into the higher air of God, where they can see more clearly and find some thread of meaning in their tangled days; there seeking some glint or gleam to glorify the drabness of the common task; there to learn how to live, how to love, how to hope, despite the tramp of heavy years. Ay, though they may not be aware of it, they are there to be baptized with a

vision of blessedness and the benediction of beauty.

Surely no man who speaks to his fellow men has a task more taxing, or more thrilling, than the preacher. As in the congregation in the picture, all sorts of folk attend his ministry; youth with its troubled dreams or its savage cynicism, mid-life with its faded idealism or its hard realism, age with its prophetic faith or its set, gray, apathetic resignation; all types of mind, all degrees of culture, all stages of development—pilgrims at every turn of the human journey. There is no common mind, no common understanding, only a common need, and what will interest some is sure to bore or bewilder others. Yet the preacher must deal with the most elusive issues of faith and the hidden secrets of the inner life, seeking to make intangible realities real and impalpable values vivid. His message has to do with the most intimate affairs of the human heart—things we say to no one and allow no one to say to us, save in the most confidential friendship—yet the awful privacy of the pulpit not only permits, but invites, the closest touch of soul upon soul and the opening of heart to heart. Truly no other form of speech known among men asks

for such delicacy of insight and acumen; such exquisite tact, taste, and tenderness of understanding.

No wonder a great Council of the Church affirmed that preaching is a sacrament, as in very truth it is, despite its failings. By the same token, to belittle it, much less to ignore it—pushing it off to one side, as in the picture—is nothing short of sacrilege. The office of the ministry is sacramental, and as such it belongs to a man by virtue not only of his temperament, his poetic gift, and his passion for humanity, but also, and much more, by his heroic quest of holiness. It is a creative office, in that it has to do with those facts in which men set their faith and in which they find the truth, fashioning the stuff of life into shapes of moral beauty. It is the unveiling of spiritual experience in an illuminated life, bringing healing to the old hurt and heartache of man, and light to those in darkness. By as much as the soul of the preacher is ennobled and made transparent by discipline, by devotion, by daring adventures of faith, by so much does he serve his high calling. The test of any sermon is not its eloquence, nor its learning, nor yet its artistry, but the regenerative note that

is in it, conveying the living word of God to living men, through a tender, triumphant, ministrant love. O my soul, remember!

When one looks more closely at the pulpit in the picture, one sees no reading-desk, not even a ledge on which to lay a Bible, a breviary, or a sermon, or so much as a sheet of notes. If only it were so everywhere; for surely if a preacher cannot remember his sermon long enough to preach it, nobody will remember it long after it is preached. At least the preacher in the picture is not reading from a manuscript; he is too earnest, too eager—his heart is on fire. No doubt his sermon has been thought out—or, better still, wrought out—in his heart, but he is speaking with the directness and freedom of a man on the hustings. Often one half wishes that it were impossible for a sermon to be read, if only the preacher might be set free to look his people in the eyes and talk of things he knows too well to forget; might feel the pull and play of soul upon soul and know the revelation of a united yearning for the Reality, to which all are aspiring. Such preaching is talking about God—nay, with God—in company with those who are longing to be aware of him, and of one another in his

presence, as simply, as naturally, and as intimately as one talks with a friend. If it makes the sermon less a product of one mind than the fruit of fellowship, in which many share, it also makes it a Holy Communion of seeking souls in quest of Him who is the end of all desire and the one beauty we were sent to seek.

In 1720 the Church of Scotland, in its Assembly, declared the reading of sermons to be displeasing to the people of God and an obstruction to the gospel. If there are exceptions to the rule, as all admit, they only prove the rule. With which agrees the wisdom of the Church of Rome in training its Orders of Preaching Friars, many of whom are among the noblest preachers of our day. Those who have heard any of the great Dominicans of our generation, in Paris or elsewhere, can testify to the rush and freedom and fire of their sermons. There is no flowery emptiness of their preaching, no vapory rhetoric, no pious pap. They speak as men who are looking straight at the truth and telling it vividly, without sacrificing either candor or caution. Ever and again, by the mercy of God, a man appears who is neither fluent nor fiery, whose eloquence is austere and uncolorful, but who speaks with an intense stillness so

searching that the souls of men shudder, and then rejoice, as when deep answers to deep. So Tauler preached at Strasburg, and Newman at Oxford; and if one were to describe some of their sermons in the language of the Bible, he might truly say that "the place was shaken."

Still, for all his earnestness and eloquence, the preacher in the picture has an impassive, unattentive, even stolid congregation—so hard is it to give bread to people who prize it no more than stone. How hard, how costing it is in agony of soul only the preacher himself, and those nearest to him, ever really know. Yet so, often, it is, through no fault of the preacher, but due to the fact that he is speaking against the wind, and his words are blown away. There are times, even whole generations, when the race of men—save a few elect who never let the fire go out—seem deaf to the faiths and truths that make it worth our time to live. But only for a time; old hungers and thirsts revive, old memories and longings begin to stir, and man returns from "a far country" haggard and aweary. Bernard of Cluny said in 1150 that "the world is very evil and the times are waxing late"; but Francis and

his Friars were only a few years away, bringing a gospel of purity, pity, and joy. In 1726 Bishop Butler said, as so many are saying to-day, "It is come to be taken for granted by many persons that Christianity is not so much a subject for inquiry, but now at length discerned to be fictitious"; yet Wesley was at the door with a white fire in his heart. There is an ebb and flow of faith in the heart of man, like the tide, and the preacher in the picture is standing in the midst of an ebb tide, as we are to-day.

None the less he goes on speaking, even if none, or only a few, will listen, bearing his witness in spite of indifference; as his brothers must do in our day, when faith has grown dim and many will not hear. Nor will he give up and let go his faith, as some are wont to do, much less lower the ideal of his office by so much as one iota, whatever the temptation, lest he be found unfaithful. If only one might hear the preacher in the picture, and the tones of his voice as he pleads with his people, it would help us to feel the atmosphere of his personality and the emphasis of his insight. Even his beseeching figure seen afar off, half-hidden in the dimness, is arresting, and we are

aware of his winsomeness, no less than of the high purpose of his appeal. Like every other preacher, he has only one sermon to preach, no matter what text or title he is using, or how often he may alter it. His real sermon is the story of his heart, the truth made real in his life and vivid in his vision, and he can tell no other triumphantly. Is it because he is not telling *his* truth—the truth learned by living and nearest to his heart—that his people are drowsy and will neither hear nor heed?

Many questions of a sort similar one asks about the preacher in the picture, as his sermon goes on, falling upon ears that hear not. One thing is plain, he is not arguing issues in the minds of his people; else they would be awake and alert, eager to hear and ready to refute his logic if it did not fit the fact as they see it. But is it the purpose of preaching, as some hold to-day, to discuss in the pulpit the problems of the pew? As a point of contact, yes; though, as often as otherwise, it digs up more snakes than it kills. What if the preacher makes his pulpit a forum and wins the debate, as he may easily do, since no one may reply to his arguments; of what use is it unless he has a deeper vision to lead the way where logic does

not go? Of course he must aid his people in their difficulties, as God gives him light, but how can he do it most fruitfully? By arguing with them or by sharing with them a clearer insight by which all are lifted to a level where our questions are either answered or shown to be foolish? How strange it is to forget that in the life of the spirit there are no arguments; only discernments.

What is the secret of a real sermon—not a mere homily, but the voice of a man who has won his way through to serenity, vision, and beauty? Nobody knows. It is a mystery past finding out, save by those who have a heart for high adventure and do not turn back. The wind of God blows; its sound is heard, but its source is secret. It is not in rich learning, or skill of training, or quickness of psychological perception, or splendor of oratory, useful as such gifts may be. No; manifestly the secret lies further back and deeper down, where no analysis can penetrate—in the soul of the preacher, spirit-born and love-illumined, his lips touched by a living coal from an unseen altar. He is a man like the rest, but different; he hears "another drummer," as Thoreau used to say of himself, not knowing how deep his

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words went. St. Paul put it in one shining sentence, telling all that words may report of things for which words were never made: "Not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father."

Our compassion goes out to the preacher in the picture; one does not believe that he is a dull preacher—only the ears of men are dull, stuffed with doubt and deadened by the din of the world. Leaning over his rickety pulpit, at some risk, he is pleading with his people, pressing them to take a gift which he deems more precious than life, his arm outstretched, as if holding the treasure at the moment in his hand, and he will not be satisfied until every one has got possession of it. Even after the sermon is over, and he is about to pronounce the blessing, one expects to see him break out afresh in some new entreaty, as Chalmers used to do, unwilling to let his people go until he has made one more effort to persuade them to accept the gift of God.

# THE PREACHER

3

# THE PREACHER

O Priest, O Expositor, O Doctor, if the divine gift hath made thee fit by genius, training, and learning, be thou a Bazaleel of the spiritual tabernacle; engrave precious gems of divine doctrine; faithfully fit them together; adorn them wisely; add splendor, grace, loveliness. Let that which was formerly believed darkly be understood by thy exposition. Let posterity by thy aid rejoice in truths understood which antiquity venerated without understanding them. Yet teach still the same things which thou didst learn, so that, although thou speakest in a new fashion, thou speakest not new things.—*St. Vincent.*

UNLESS all signs fail, we are on the eve of a new era of assured and all-pervading religious faith, and its flowing tide will bring us a new race of great preachers. Not for long will man be content with dim glimpses of a God who sits weaving mystery on the far-away hills of silence and wonder. We are witnessing the collapse of agnosticism and the bankruptcy of nationalism, at the bidding of the soul of man in quest of a more satisfying sense of Divine reality. In philosophy, in literature, in the restless life round about us a tendency toward God is everywhere evident. In the Church there is an undertone of unity, of fellowship,

of solemn high resolve, which will make the temple vocal with a new and appealing eloquence in times not far away.

Things do not satisfy; the soul has its rights and demands. Our generation, if not suffering from suppressed religion, is aware of a profounder impulse moving underneath its clatter and clutter—an eager, wistful longing for a more vivid experience of spiritual reality. There is a deep desire for spiritual support from a source hid in spiritual mystery, as a reservoir of motive, as a spring of health, as a secret of inner power and poise, as a dynamic of social idealism. Never has there been so vast a force of incipient spiritual activity, to be influenced and directed for good or ill, as there is to-day. What an opportunity for a pilot-voice in the pulpit, free alike from panics of faith and dogmatic depressiveness, yet true to those bosom-mysteries out of which are the issues of life. The holy day is here; the human heart is here. To-day, as in all the yesterdays, sin stains, sorrow wounds, and death smites with tender, terrible stroke, and man seeks an ultimate solace in God. Such need asks for an authentic spiritual insight, and it can only be met by a preacher whose heart God has

touched with prophetic light and priestly love.

Who is the preacher and what manner of man is he? He is a man born to religion, as other men are born to art or industry—born a little nearer than others to the veil that swings between the world of sense and the world unseen, a man to whom spiritual cares and interests are what secular cares and interests are to other men; one who sees in our brief, broken mortal life immortal meanings and proclaims those meanings to his fellows. He is a man who has taken into his heart the visions of the loftiest souls, who believes those visions to be the truth about life and death, and who tries by every art at his command to make them real and vivid and commanding to others. Above all, if he is a Christian preacher, he is a man who has beheld a vision of "the Human life of God," knows it to be the ultimate version of reality, and seeks to interpret it to men through a refined and devout intellect, illumined by a pure and aspiring soul. Such is the ideal of the preacher, and while our frail reality is dwarfed by it, as King David would be should he stand beside Angelo's statue of him, we dare not lower it by as much as one jot.

For such a life of ministry no endowment or training is too high. Religion is primarily a spirit and way of living, but it is also an outlook upon life and the world; and its teacher must be able to expound it in the porch of philosophy. He must walk up to the front door of the most searching intellect of his age and interpret the truths that make us men, never content to enter by the back door of a mere emotionalism. It can be done, but to do it the preacher must know his age, love it, live in it, and not give way to denunciatory scolding of it. He must know something of the spirit and facts of science, the propositions of philosophy, the definitions and distinctions of historic theology, the great ethnic religions of the race; the lives of saints and skeptics; the currents of history and the disclosures of sociology; the findings of psychology, its insight into broken minds, its art of dealing with sick souls; the riches of literature, art, and song. However far he may fall below such an intellectual ideal, he must at least be widely and deeply read in the best that has been thought and achieved by man. If we take intellect out of religion, give it over to the care of half-educated, narrow men, out of sympathy with their times,

it will be reduced to a superstition. From Augustine to Jonathan Edwards our Christianity has been interpreted by an apostolic succession of great intellects in the pulpit; and the high tradition must not fail—least of all in an era of theological break-up when old roads vanish and paths are dim.

Yet the most perfect intellectual equipment is not sufficient to make a preacher. There is in every true minister a tender, sympathetic faculty, akin to what we feel in the poems of Burns—a faculty which brings out the color in gray human lives, as sunlight evokes beauty from the brown earth. This loving genius has been the central and inviting charm of every historic pulpit. In the voices of the great preachers one hears "the still sad music of humanity," its shouts of joy and its sob of grief —blended notes of the passion of the lover, the yearning of the father, and the wooing tones of the mother. It is sympathy that softens the human heart and makes it susceptible to the impress of heavenly truth. The preacher must be a lover of folk, despite their petty ways of thinking and often ugly ways of doing; he must love them for what they are, and for what they are to be, knowing

the hidden, unguessed goodness that is in them. He must be an instrument of love, knowing that nothing is great, nothing is small, but that our human adventure has worth and meaning only as it embodies the Love of God in the life of man. No tale of Divine Love was ever yet believed from lips unmoved by human pity.

Emerson went to church one day, but he could not tell from the sermon, for all its art, whether the preacher had ever really lived, loved, sinned, or suffered—had ever known the tug of temptation or the torment of dismay, had ever heard the laugh of a child or looked into an open grave. Unless the man in the pulpit has felt the deep hurt and heartache of humanity—its bitter, blinding tragedy—unless he knows the rough places, the dangerous turns, the dismal stretches of the old, winding road, and something of what the pilgrims carry in their packs, he cannot minister to our need, much less lead us far along the way whither we seek to go. If he is aware of his own heart and its yearnings, he must know that men do not go to church to learn about science, philosophy, or art, useful as such studies may be. They go sorely needing and sadly seeking

something else—longing to hear a voice out of the heavens, telling them of the things eye hath not seen nor ear heard. They go seeking, as of old, the healing touch, the forgiving word, the hand put forth in the darkness, which makes them know that they are not alone in their struggle for the good. The preacher must live with the people if he is to know their problems, and he must live with God if he is to solve them.

Above all, perhaps, the preacher must have, in some degree, the seer-like quality of soul, which is the rarest and most precious gift of God to man. As we see it in the mighty prophets, it is a power of spiritual perception by which Beauty is found in barren places, as when Hosea discovered in a desolating personal tragedy a new dimension of the love of God; or a moral divination of the trend of facts, forces, events, such as led Isaiah to oppose an alliance with Egypt as a covenant with hell, which it turned out to be. In any field of vision—the lonely sorrow of a broken heart, the out-working of a national policy, or the crisis of the Church—the seer discerns not only what is there, but what may be there, and will be there, if the waiting will of God is allowed to

rule, and what will befall if that will is ignored. If to his power of insight the seer adds the art, "the magic of the necessary word," to make the invisible vivid, and body forth the ideal in concrete vision, his word is a command and a deed. To every preacher, in some measure, clearly or fitfully, such grace is given, if he has the valor to follow and obey it.

The sermons of such preachers, shot through with gleams of a light beyond the sun, gather up the ideals and longings of humanity, its aspirations with their divine torment of discontent, its visions with their long-delayed fulfillment. They are mystical, practical, poetical, ironical, consoling, rebuking by turns. They see the invisible; they dream dreams, fight battles, and sometimes perceive afar off the day when humanity shall camp upon the heights and hang out the banner of victory, triumphant over ignorance and evil. This faculty is indispensable to the preacher, if he is to read the newer word of God and proclaim it. By it he strips off the hull of dogma and finds the kernel of truth; in its light he searches the human heart; with it he explains riddles. It helps him to interpret the divine suggestiveness of the commonplace and to make the

kingdom of heaven something more than a visionary scene suspended in the sky. Intellect, sympathy, insight, these three; but the greatest of these is the gift of vision which casts a white light over a dim, gray world of fact.

Inspired preaching is the greatest power known among men—that of a kindled, consecrated personality. It is more compelling than literature, more intimate than architecture, more vivid than music. Nowhere else can speech be so clothed with power to awaken, rebuke, exalt, and heal. The Church must not smother its sweetest voices; she must give them time to brood their dreams—time to think and pray and fashion their winged prophecies. Between a domineering dogmatism and an illusive, erratic liberalism there is room for a pulpit wise with the wisdom of insight, free as the air, and in many keys and tones eloquent for God and the life of the spirit. Never since the dawn of our era has there been such a need as to-day for a virile, seer-like pulpit, aglow with that love which in covering a multitude of sins reveals them more radically and redeemingly than the most searching exposure.

Preachers shape the Church—that is one-half of the truth: the Church also molds its preachers—that is the other side; and when the Church honors the pulpit the pulpit will honor it. Think of the pulpit in a petty way, take all dignity out of it, belittle its value and function, betray a low estimate of its service, and it will be filled with weak and ineffective men, timeservers and "sellers of rhetoric," as St. Augustine would say. Honor bombast, showy claptrap, and the antics of the sensationalist in the spotlight, and verily we shall have our reward. By the same token, ask for insight, sympathy, and the speech of the heart, for noble thought and clear vision in the service of the ideal, and the true preacher will appear, bringing tidings of ineffable things hidden in the hinterlands of faith. Ask for the seer, the thinker, the leader with a sense of the mountain paths of life and faith, and he will come in answer to our need, with a voice to stir the old, forgotten memories of the soul. As we listen, the horizon is lifted, broadened, and new meanings are unveiled; we hear the cry of life and know that God is the answer to that cry. And sometimes,

"As from an infinitely distant land,
Come airs and floating echoes that convey
A melancholy into all our day."

Glorious is the history of the pulpit. One who has ears can hear the far-off thunder of Savonarola, the deep bass voice of Luther, the fiery speech of Knox—men mighty in the spirit, before whom princes trembled; and St. Francis preaching to the doves. One who has eyes can see, behind the desk in a country meetinghouse, the fine face of Robertson, made luminous by the outshining of a sensitive, sorrowful soul; the refined and scholarly Stanley, the embodiment of a century of English culture; and the lonely, pilgrim soul of Newman. Nearer by one sees Phillips Brooks standing beside the huge pillar in Trinity Church, pouring forth his impetuous eloquence in a torrent of spiritual passion and divine pathos; Beecher, the Shakespeare of the pulpit, facile, fertile, fascinating, his voice like an orchestra; and the gentle, meditative David Swing, the one mighty preacher of Beauty, who came to the new, uprising Chicago prophesying of liberty of faith and of a Christianity which is also a civilization. From Maurice to Martineau, from Maclaren to Gunsaulus, from

Chalmers and Chapin to Spurgeon, Broadus, Brent, and Quayle—was ever a roll-call more thrilling or a cloud of witnesses more inspiring?

No young man need falter at the steps of the pulpit, consecrated as it is by so much of genius, power, and beauty. If he would touch the souls of his fellow men, refine and exalt their faith, enable sorrowful eyes to see majestic meanings in life, and turn the thoughts of youth from the glittering semblance of life to homage for truth, beauty, character, and the service of humanity; if he have such hopes and dreams, let him enter the pulpit humbly and reverently, in love of God and love of man, speak the truth as God gives him to see it in a spirit and form worthy of the truth, and his voice will echo in the hearts of men long after he has fallen asleep.

# WHAT IS PREACHING?

## WHAT IS PREACHING?

> What do ye counsel, what do ye commend? Shall I devote myself to prayer, or shall I go about preaching? Of a truth, I that am little, and simple, and rude in speech, have received more grace of prayer than of speaking. Now in prayer there seemeth to be gain and heaping up of grace; in preaching, a certain giving out of the gifts received from heaven; in prayer, again, a cleansing of the inward feelings and an union with the one true and highest good, together with a strengthening of virtue; in preaching, the spiritual feet wax dusty, and many things distract a man, and discipline is relaxed.—*St. Francis of Assisi.*

So Bonaventura reports the dilemma of Francis, who felt that in prayer we talk with God and listen for his answer, whilst in preaching we think, say, and hear such things as pertain to men. He consulted with Brother Silvester and Sister Clare, who agreed that the herald should go forth to preach, though he might long to linger and listen. He obeyed, and at Cannara the whole population asked to be admitted to the Order, as if to teach us that the more closely prayer and preaching are linked together the more richly both are rewarding: as in the little Prayer Room of Wes-

ley in City Road Chapel. If the preaching of our day is hesitating and vague, lacking the mysticism which lies at the heart of all spiritual power, mayhap the story of Francis tells us why it is so.

After all, what is preaching? If we put the question to Beecher, he tells us that preaching is the making and mending of men. If we ask Phillips Brooks, he describes it as the revelation of truth through personality, truth shining through the prism of a human soul. William Law held that the end of preaching is so to strike all the outward senses of the soul that from sleeping insensibility it may be awakened to know God and live in him. One of the greatest sermons in our language was that of Channing at the dedication of Divinity Hall in Boston, in 1826, and its subject was the Christian Ministry. In a series of majestic paragraphs he sets forth the secret of power in the pulpit, by which he meant a vivid sense of spiritual truth which enables the preacher to quicken a like sense in others. If we go further back and put the question to St. Paul, he tells us that preaching is persuasion. That is to say, they all agree with "Father" Taylor, the sailor evangelist, when he said that it is the

business of the preacher "to take something hot out of his own heart and shove it into mine."

Let it be remembered that preaching, in the New Testament sense at least—as in the ministry of the mighty Hebrew prophets—is not the making of a homily; it is the urgent announcement of a message. There is evidence of the delivery of sermons or homilies in the early Christian assemblies, but it is nowhere called preaching. St. Paul is not said to have preached at Troas, but to have discoursed—a very different thing—and that may explain why Eutychus fell asleep to his hurt. Three words in the Greek are properly rendered "preaching," but they identify the preacher as a Messenger, a Herald, a Courier telling momentous tidings. It is not an otiose addition when teaching is mentioned along with preaching, for these are very different functions, each useful after its kind; especially the priest, whose creative leadership is sorely needed today, if the larger vision of faith is to become a liturgy of worship. Other offices are also linked together, "preach the word, reprove, rebuke, exhort," edify; but it is clear that to preach the gospel is to announce Christ to

unbelievers and to those who have not heard the news. The old Evangelicals used to divide their sermons into two parts: one addressed to believers, the other to the unconverted—as if they were aware that in the latter part alone they preached the gospel. Useful as other offices may be, what we need to-day is to recapture and relearn the genius of preaching in its unique, urgent meaning; and those who have that gift ought to be set free to be persuaders and winners of men, after the manner of Francis and his friars.

My reason for inquiring into the nature of preaching is the feeling, so widespread to-day, not only that modern preaching is chaotic, anæmic, and lacking in power, but that the pulpit has become a useless thing. Laments of like kind have been heard in every age, even when the greatest voices were speaking. Why should it be so, unless it be that we have forgotten what it means to preach, or else we do not speak with the authority of insight and the verity of experience—mere apologists defending the message, not heralds announcing the best news ever told among men? The human heart remains the same in its needs, its aspirations, its lonely, wistful yearnings, and its

broodings on the dim hereafter never fade or die. To-day, as in all the past, to any fresh or earnest word on these intimate and mysterious themes men listen with the eagerness which imagination ascribes to the Ages of Faith. Our Christian ministry to-day may be toiling in the twilight, uttering its message in a stammering tongue, but that is only temporary. Soon it will find once more the master key and speak with the emphasis of insight and the accent of power, making "one music as before, but vaster."

When we look into the New Testament we are startled—and dismayed—by the contrast between its boundless wealth and our poverty of power. Indeed, if we ask ourselves what was the *motif* of the ministries of Jesus and his apostles, we find it all summed up in the text which Channing chose for his sermon: "His word was with power." Twenty-five times, in the most important connections, this word appears in the first three Gospels. When we think of the New Testament preachers, and the irresistible power of the gospel by which sin was shattered, we often feel that it was some special dispensation denied us to-day. So, strangely enough, Wesley thought only a month before

his "strange warming of the heart," as we read in his "Journal": "This, I grant, God wrought in the first stages of Christianity; but the times are changed. What reason have I to believe that He works in the same manner now?" Even when he asked the question the answer was at the door, and soon he was going all over England a herald of the gospel. Surely the same sources of power are open to us to-day if we seek until we find and show ourselves worthy of it.

Now, consider. If preaching is persuasion, the man in the pulpit must be utterly persuaded if he is to persuade anyone else. No hesitation, no balancing of probabilities will do. "I am persuaded," said St. Paul, and there lies the secret of his magnificent and ceaseless evangel, to which we owe more than to anything else except the life of Jesus. Persuaded of what? He was perusaded in mind and heart and soul of the Love of God, its tenderness, its tenacity, and its final triumph—nothing else really matters. Once men are sure that there is Love hidden in the hardness of life, meaning in its mystery, purpose in its pitiful broken beauty, and something eternal in its evanescence, the rest is only a detail of interpretation

and adaptation. Until the supreme reality of religious faith commands the intellect of the preacher and subdues his heart, no matter how learned or eloquent he may be, there is no power of persuasion. Never were men more aware of religious perplexities, and, by the same token, never was there a richer opportunity for wise and winsome leadership in the pulpit, if it be both intellectually and spiritually authentic. To that end the pulpit must be free, fearless, and utterly frank, evading no difficulty, if it is to make men see the truth that sets us free from haunting fear and dark fatality.

Persuaded, how? No one would say that St. Paul reasoned or argued himself into the vivid and glowing faith that glorified his life, though he was a mind of the first order. Even in an age clamorous for clarity mere intellectual conviction is not enough. Logic is ice; religion is fire. Faith is not first a philosophy; it is a fellowship. In the order of experience, its philosophy follows its fellowship and is an effort, imperfect at best, to interpret the depth and wonder of that life of God in the soul which is the supreme reality of mortal life. In the "Journal" of Wesley we read how, in early life,

he was troubled by this question: "How can you preach to others, who have no faith yourself?" He asked Peter Böhler whether he should not leave off preaching, and Böhler advised against it. "But what can I preach?" said Wesley. Böhler replied, "Preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith." At first glance that looks like an exhortation to hypocrisy, but it is not. Wesley had no intellectual difficulty in respect to the faith he was preaching; none at all, apparently. It commanded his intellect, but it did not fire his heart. Later, what had long been true to him as a theology became an inward experience, and his word was with power in one of the greatest ministries in the story of England.

To-day, alas, the situation seems to be the other way round, and the pulpit is so vexed by misgiving that its gospel ceases to be an apostolate and becomes an apology; but that is to reverse the true order of faith. No man may hope to answer any vital question of life—much less the unasked questions of the human heart—until he has learned to know the Answerer; and then he discovers, as Newman did at the end of his agony, that a thousand intel-

lectual difficulties do not make one spiritual doubt. No eloquence of tongue, no charm of manner, no artistry of homiletics can atone for a lack or loss of a vital inward experience of spiritual reality, to seek which is our quest and to find which is our crown and consecration. Without it the pulpit may be able and useful, at once instructive and entertaining, and in many ways valuable as a popular forum or an educational agency, its sermons ranging all the way from lectures on economics to essays stewed in cream; but it is bereft of that haunting music which breaks the heart—and mends it—lifting the life of man, troubled by sin and tormented by woe, above a beshadowed earth into the shadowless sky of vision and joy.

In the lives of the supreme preachers one nearly always finds a golden year, a shining day—sometimes a single luminous hour—which gives the key to their career: they ceased to stammer and their sermons moved with the lilt and lift of lyrics. An unknown layman asked Tauler if he knew in his heart what he taught in his words, and he had to admit that he did not. They went together into the silence, and when he returned men heard their own souls speak in his simple, healing words.

Who does not remember that golden year in the life of Phillips Brooks when, as if at the kiss of God, his spirit bloomed and a whiter light from a higher sky fell upon his letters and diaries? One night Bushnell leaped out of bed, caught up into a great joy, crying, "I have found it! I have found the gospel!" He seemed to pass a boundary, he said, beyond partial glimpses and doubts, into a clearer sense of God and his nearness; a change from belief to faith, not an assent to any proposition, but a fellowship with a Father and Friend. Thereafter his preaching had a new dimension—as Tennyson said of a Knight of the Round Table, "He laid his mind on theirs, and they believed in his beliefs"—and in prayer he was a child climbing upon the knees of God and talking to him face to face. On a spring day, under an apple tree, young Beecher lay musing, when a sense of the Love of God flooded him like the soft light sifting through the leaves, transfiguring all his days and fusing all his faith to a glow-point of vision which never faded.

Whether the vision flash suddenly or dawn slowly, as determined by temperament, it is the Pearl of Great Price to the preacher, the

ineffable, all-solving word of his ministry. The word used to describe it does not matter: it is an experience of union with the Whole which gives unity to the entire personality, body, mind, and spirit, evoking every power of being—sometimes, it would seem, actually discovering new capacities—making the whole man an instrument for the expression of the life of God in the soul. When Bagehot first took Hutton to hear Maurice in Lincoln's Inn Chapel, they found something different from what goes on in an ordinary service; the mystic power of a life, a sense of "something religious in the air," which started new echoes in their hearts. They were unable to analyze it, except to say that the preacher "seemed to be the channel of a communication, not the source of it"; and that he had much of the spirit of "knight-errantry." There we may leave it, remembering the words of Maurice to Tennyson, that "a theology which does not correspond to the deepest thoughts and feelings of human beings cannot be a true theology"; and of such a theology, the fruit of insight and understanding, he would say—

> "Derives it not from what we have,
> The likest God within the soul?"

If we go further back we find Ruysbroeck, a humble Flemish priest, who, despite his lack of learning, in the order of genius, as theologian, and therefore as poet, is as far above the courtly Bossuet as Dante is above Boileau. Face to face with the awful mysteries that shroud God and man, Bossuet seeks, argues, gropes; Ruysbroeck sees, knows, sings. Bossuet does not open, does not enter; Ruysbroeck speaks from the inside. Bossuet spins words; Ruysbroeck pours out a stream of light. If Bossuet is like the mighty wind in the Upper Room, the brief, simple, love-laden words of Ruysbroeck are the tongues of fire, living and luminous. Nay, they are as the whisper of a voice of gentle stillness, and even to this day his speech has upon it a freshness as of morning dew, telling what he had learned by living with an accent of insight and the serenity of vision. It is not information; it is incarnation. It is not simply intellectual, but moral and spiritual. It takes the whole man to know the truth, because in the life of the spirit and truth is not merely something we may learn; it is something we must become.

From belief we must advance to faith—and from faith to faith—by a deep inward way

which transcends logic and makes the truth our truth; as Luther did in his cell at Erfurt; as Wesley did in the chapel on that memorable evening in May; as Dale did when, of a sudden, he realized for the first time—though he had been preaching for years—that Christ is *alive*. The great truths of faith, which are the themes of the pulpit, must be known by an immediate and profound personal sense of divine things, if we are to speak with power and persuade others; since it is not the business of the preacher to prove things, but to make men *see* the truth. What Milton said of the poet is equally true of his kinsman, the preacher, "He who would be a true poet ought himself to be a true poem—not presuming to sing high praises of what is worthy unless he have in himself the experience and practice of all that is praiseworthy." Always it comes back to the culture of the life of the spirit in the heart of the preacher, his inward insight and adventure; and as he lives in God, so will the power of God live and speak in his words.

For preaching—in spite of our pitiful confusions and inefficiencies—is the noblest vocation on earth. No other calling asks so much of the manhood of a man, no other offers so

much to those who enter it. No career can compare with it in the rich and satisfying relations into which it brings a man with his fellow men, the searching insight which it gives into the human heart, and the opportunity which it offers to serve the souls of men. Knowing the terror of evil-doing, the preacher seeks to persuade men to live righteously; suffering with them in their sorrows, he leads them to the Eternal Comforter; and at the end-time he bids them trust the Love that never faileth. Truth taken into the heart sanctifies the life, and life sanctified reveals the truth; in that paradox lies the secret of service, the character of the preacher lighting up like an altar lamp the teaching of his words. When his work is done it is tribute enough if men say of him, not that he was learned or eloquent, or profound, but that "his word was with power."

# THE NEW KEYBOARD

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Above and beyond all things the religious life is not a search after comfort. Religion is the vision of something that stands beyond, behind, and within the passing flux of immediate things; something that is real and yet waiting to be realized; something which is a remote possiblity and yet the greatest of present facts; something that gives meaning to all that passes and yet eludes apprehension; something whose possession is the final good and yet is beyond all reach; something which is the ultimate ideal and yet the hopeless quest.—*A. N. Whitehead.*

## I

WHERE are we in religion? What has brought us to where we are? Whither are we bound? What is the meaning of the changing vision of religious ideals? How can we think scientifically and live spiritually, uniting the eternal values of the spirit with the new knowledge of the world and its laws? What has happened that the old clarities of faith are blurred and must be interpreted anew to a new generation? Why do men think so differently from their fathers, as if they lived in a new world? What has made so much of the thinking of other times inadequate, not refuted but

forgotten, like a dim memory of some other state of existence? Has something broken in us, dividing us from our fathers, giving the issues of faith a different basis and the problems of life another solution?

A multitude are asking such questions in a mood of bewilderment, as if the old had become obsolete and the new not yet real. What has happened? Just what has happened in all other ages, only more so, because of the amazing advance of thought and knowledge. Everything has changed; a world-view is passing away, and the inner attitude of man has altered. A new universe of law, order, and energy has been unveiled; the child in school, the youth in college, see all things—except religion—in different aspect and relations from those in which their fathers saw them. The sun, the stars, the solid earth, the story of the race, its habits of thought and methods of approach, its standards and estimates—all is transformed. The eternal realities remain, but they are seen in a new light and from a new point of view. New ideas are in the air, new vistas dazzle, new hopes allure, new adventures invite.

The truth is that we are in the midst of the

most astonishing revolution in the inner ideal and outlook of man in respect to the deepest issues of life since the days of Luther. Indeed, it is more far-reaching and profound than the Reformation, and, by that fact, its promise of liberation is more wonderful, if we have the courage to follow where it leads. Old things are becoming new; even the eternal things are seen in a new setting and against a new background. What can be shaken is falling, and what abides is more enduring and precious by its own inherent value. No wonder the people are bewildered and turn away from the Church; the pulpit itself is perplexed and confused, unable to find its way. A famous preacher told how, of a sudden, his old sermons became flat, stale, and unintelligible, because he learned, when he looked into his own heart, his idea of God had imperceptibly changed, like the shifting of the earth on its axis. The newer Word has not yet been interpreted in the terms of our generation; for that we need such a new preaching as is now taking shape.

## II

In short, the preacher has a new keyboard upon which to play the everlasting music, and

the fingers of our sermons grope blindly over its unfamiliar keys, seeking a new, ineffable note. When we do strike a great, haunting chord, in a manner not unworthy of the melody it invokes, the hearts of men respond with a startled and wistful joy. Never, in any generation, has there been a more eager, widespread desire for a personal sense of spiritual reality; men want religion, but they do not know how to get it. They may want its consolations more than its commitments, its delights more than its disciplines; no matter—the Sect of Seekers to-day, as of old, are in search of reality, of fresh insight, of a revealing and a transforming vision of life. A multitude of people are hungry of heart, confused, astray, adrift, and the Church does not meet their need. A recent widely read novel, "If Winter Comes," tells what is in many a mind as a vague feeling, but seldom put into words:

> Hapgood, the remedy's the old remedy. The old God. But it's more than that. It's light, more light! The old revelation was good for the old world and suited to the old world. We want a revelation in terms of the new world's understanding. We want light, light! Do you suppose that an age that knows wireless and can fly is going to find spiritual sustenance in the food of an age that thought thunder was God speaking? Man's done

> with it. It means nothing to him, it gives nothing to him. He turns all that's in him to get all he wants out of this world and let the next go rip. Man cannot live on bread alone, the churches tell him; but he says, "I am living on bread alone, and doing well on it." But I tell you, Hapgood, that down in the crypt and abyss of every man's soul is a hunger for other food than this earthly stuff. And the churches know it; but instead of reaching down to him what he wants—light, light—they invite him to dancing and picture shows, and you're a jolly fine fellow, and religion is no spoil-sport, and all that sort of latter-day tendency. Damn it, he can get all that outside the churches and get it better. He wants light, Hapgood!

Something is missing in modern religion; all of us are aware of it, though we may not be able to describe or define it. Our churches are filled, if filled at all, with church people, or people trained in the tradition of the church, to whom the language of the church is familiar and its symbolism luminous, if it be only in the dim light of stained glass. The failure of the pulpit to reform the wicked, to hold the attention of the young, to win the respect of the lover of science, to attract the man in the street, is clearly manifest. Yet, instead of being hardened against the influence and appeal of religion, a vast host are seeking it, yearning for it, ready to receive it when it is made real; willing to listen on their knees to anyone who

has a soul-convincing truth, or who knows a way of living that makes life an inspiration and not an incubus. Religion attracts; the church repels. What is wrong? A letter from an observing friend tells of conditions in England, the while it gives many a hint as to what may be wrong:

> Wherever I go, whether in trains, in trams, in hotels, the one subject that men discuss is religion, and the failure of the churches. That is the attitude of the spiritually-minded man in the street toward the Church. Sometimes he comes to a service to find out what it is all about, but the service is dull to him, and he goes away disappointed. The fact is, our services have taken a form which only the initiated can understand and enjoy. They presuppose a long training. They are food for an acquired taste. The hymns, the music, the phraseology and form of worship require a knowledge which the man in the street does not have.
>
> To put it plainly, we have become connoisseurs in religion. We are as fastidious about our services as Beau Brummel was about his clothes, and like him, we have become "arbiters of elegancies." What will be the end of it? I do not know; I only know the end of Beau Brummel: "After three years of drivelling imbecility, he died in a pauper asylum." We call our fastidiousness reverence, but the world calls it dullness. If we must feed, can we not confine our fastidiousness to the morning hour and, in the evening, give the man in the street a chance to feed on the Bread of Life? He is hungry, but he cannot satisfy himself on our food.

Here, picturesquely stated, is something to ponder, if we do not desire the Church to be simply a group of nice, gentle, refined folk playing a little private game, and getting satisfaction out of it, without reference to the rest of the community. Surely we cannot be content to have it so, least of all in an age of aching spiritual loneliness, when so many are seeking without finding, journeying without arriving, and not a few are tempted to give up the quest as futile. One recalls the flashing phrase of Shaw in "Saint Joan," "The Church is in the hands of God, not God in the hands of the Church"; and the ringing word of Carlyle, even more true to-day than when he wrote, "The world asks of its Church in these times, more passionately than of any other institution, the question, Canst thou teach us or not?" Yet the Church can bring light in darkness, and healing for the deep hurts of humanity, and it is the mission of the new preaching to help to do it.

## III

What is the message of the new preaching? It is none other than the old, eternal gospel in its creative and redeeming wonder; the gospel

that stirred the souls of Wesley, Luther, and Francis; the gospel of God in Christ interpreted in terms of the thought and need of these new and changed times. If we speak of a new preaching, it does not mean that the gospel of Christ is to be truncated, mutilated, and trimmed down to fit the fads and altering fashions of thought in our age; since to be up to date to-day is to be out of date to-morrow, and antiquated next week. No, it means that the gospel will show itself to-day, as in all other ages, able to live and triumph amid vast and unimagined developments of life and thought. Nay, more; it means that the gospel, by virtue alike of its verity and its vitality, will make the new learning an instrument, not an enemy, transfiguring it with a new splendor.

Chesterton may have his fun about "the mindlessness of the modern mind"; and one must admit that on the surface there is much to justify his gibe. But, manifestly, we must look below the whirling eddies of our age, many of which are only reactions and do not come to stay, to the deeper currents underflowing; below its vapory cynicisms and sentimentalisms, its thin optimisms and equally thin pessimisms, its delirious clamor and its de-

structive insistences. In the midst of much that is foggy it seems plain that the future will be ruled by the Spirit of Science, the Democratic Principle, and the light and power of an emancipated Spiritual Evangel; and these three must work together as partners. Anyway, as there was a medieval mind, so to-day there is an outlook, attitude, and point of view distinctly modern, the fruit of the Holy Spirit moving among us and within us. It has its origin in the union of many movements, so profound that they were like tidal waves in the mind of man, and one has only to name some of them to make it plain why and wherein the mind of to-day thinks so differently from the mind of any former time.

First and most fundamental is the overthrow of the idea of an outside, "absentee God," and the discovery of God as the soul of his universe working out his purpose of creative good will. The undergirding, all-transfiguring insight of our time is a new thought about God, a sense of his immediacy and everywhereness, and of the Spiritual Life as the key to the history and meaning of the world; its natural processes guided and glorified by supernatural grace, its swift forces directed by an increasing purpose

unfolding through the ages. Instead of a world made like a watch, wound up and set going, with which God interferes here and there, God is found to be the Life and Meaning of the universe, his will its rhythm, his purpose its reason for being, his presence its sacramental consecration. Instead of a few miracles of old, hard to grasp, we are bidden to behold a universe in which all things depend upon the mystery of an infinite will. It is a stupendous conception, a new setting for the old faith, in which the incarnation is no longer an interpolation in history, but a revelation of the God who is in all history; showing us the realities of religion not only as forces of history, but as facts of the cosmic order.

Second, the victory of historical research which threw men back from external authorities to find the basis of faith, and its verification, in the living experience of God. Jesus based everything upon experience, and the mind of our day follows in his way, knowing that there is no hope save in the experience of the living God, and that in that experience there is nothing but hope. It means the rediscovery of the Church, not as a mere authority, but as a fellowship in the freedom

and service of the truth, since no one may find God for another and no one can find him alone; a fellowship of the seekers and finders of God in every land. In the same way, the sacred books of the race are read in a larger context, as the records of the historic experience of things immortal which is the glory of the ages, each in its own degree. If the Bible has thus a new background and binding, it has also a new beauty, as the monumental witness of the presence in man of the Holy Spirit. In lyric grace and epic power, alike in the granite solidity of its prose and the flaming splendor of its poetry, it speaks of the love and will of God revealed in the life of the people which were of old; whereby we may learn to read his love and will in the facts, forces, events, and tumults of our tangled time. For, evermore, the vital issue is not what our age is asking of religion, but the undertone of God in every age and what he is demanding of our generation.

Third, the advent of science, with its revelation of the reign of law as the organized will of God, and of development as the Divine way of working, banishing whim and caprice from the faith and fear of man. If religion teaches us how to live in the world, it is the glory of the

new science that it shows us what kind of world it is in which we live. They are in no wise conflicting, but complementary, and each is a revelation of the Spirit of Truth—one dealing with fact, the other with values; and both are needed, since, as Amiel said, if "fact without meaning is dumb, meaning without fact is empty." There is no longer any doubt that we live in a living, dynamic, unfolding universe, even if the method by which new forms of life appear—whether suddenly by leaps, or slowly by minute variations, or both —is not yet clear. Nor must we stop until we learn the truth; for, if God is in the process, his love its creative genius, it is for us to know his way of working and work with him. It is curious how, when we learn how a thing is done, some are ready to say that God does not do it; whereas we are called to be his partners and fellow workers. Truly the Spirit of God speaks to us in science, in its spirit of humility, its austere veracity, its single-hearted devotion to the truth, no less than in its disinterested and beneficent ministry to the body, mind, and soul of man.

Fourth, the rise of democracy, the increasing sense of human solidarity, making us members

one of another, the growth of a more vivid social imagination whereby the injury of one, however small, becomes the hurt and horror of all. In the wake of the industrial revolution in England the Spirit of God touched the minds of men like Maurice, Kingsley, and Ruskin, making the physical and social misery of the many the spiritual agony of the few. When Maurice said, "I confess the sins of my age as my own," identifying himself with his fellows in their struggles and sorrows—aye, even in their sins—he discovered a new depth in the mystery of the Cross. At last we are beginning to see, dimly but truly, the meaning of the Great Mysticism of Jesus: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me." By a Divine pragmatism, no less than by a more sensitive vision, we know that God has tied humanity together, and that we can never again be happy while others, even the most obscure, are suffering under injustice, oppression, or any form of inhumanity.

The conditions of life to-day, the drawing together of the ends of the earth, the discovery that the race is one community, have intensified the sense of social obligation and responsi-

bility. The growth of industry, the emphasis upon economics, the hunger for fraternity, the awakening awareness that the good of humanity as a whole does actually exist—all bespeak a new order of the ages in the making. The gray smoke-cloud of the factory, equally with the salts and acids in the laboratory, influence our religious thought and faith quite as much as the church. Ahead of us lie undreamed-of adventures of thought, untried tasks, and unguessed methods, as the Christian vision is extended to cover the whole of life, seeking the kingdom of God on earth. Our faith in redemption will no longer be merely personal, but also communal, and our hope lies in uniting the oldest faith with the newest knowledge in the service of a Beloved Community. Together we rise, together we fall—God has so ordained it, making togetherness the law of salvation.

Fifth, in the field of psychology, still in its infancy—some of its forms tentative, not to say fantastic—incredible disclosures have been made, and unpredictable things are promised in the future. Already it is searching the secret places of the soul, helping man to a better understanding of himself, his powers and capacities, his relations with his fellows and

his fellowship with God. It has brought us a reappraisal of religious experience, its verity, its value, its varieties, with the result that we have a clearer insight into the nature of religion and a better method for its culture. Also, there has grown up among us a variegated health-mysticism, taking shape in all sorts of cults, based upon the belief that in religion we may tap new sources of power and bring blessings yet unrealized; "as well for the body as the soul," as the Prayer Book puts it. William James held this discovery of the power of spiritual energy to alter the lot of man by changing his inner climate to be the most significant revolution in his generation; and we may add that he himself—albeit more spirited than spiritual—had much to do with it. At any rate, men everywhere feel that they are living below their rights, using only a fraction of their potentialities, and that the energy that lies in religion can remake life, giving it poise and power.

Sixth, a revival of mysticism, an effort to explore the inner life, in quest of a technique for realizing religion not simply as the truth in life, but also, and much more, as the life in truth. Our fathers sought security, as against

some visitation of God, or else from a dark confusion of thought about God; whereas we seek supremacy over life. They asked for guaranties; we want growth. It is the difference between endurance and adventure, and if we may not say that the word "release" is the key word of our generation, it is almost so. In one of the plays of Maeterlinck, "Pelleas and Melisande," in an empty and silent scene one hears the poignant cry: "Open the door! Open the door! Open the Big Door!" It is the cry of our age, physically the most comfortable age ever known, and spiritually the most uncomfortable. The world is full of locked-up lives, inhibited by shyness, by fear, by the flatness of life, by a thousand bolts and bars; spirits in prison and unable to get out. In an age full of all possible surprises and thrills, even our boys and girls are cynics, *blasé* and bored, trying to be haughty and hard-boiled. So, inevitably, in revolt against an arid intellectualism, as well as an empty ecclesiasticism, men are turning to the inner life; seeking God where alone he may be found, knowing that the truth that sets us free from fear and dark fatality is not a treasure to be received, but a trophy to be achieved.

Seventh, no one need be told of the passionate longing for religious unity and fellowship and the appalling sense of the folly and futility of sectarianism—its weakness, its wastage, its impotence in face of the problem of redemption in its tragic and gigantic modern setting. Nothing in our time is finer than the growing and widening fellowship of our religious communions and the emphasis upon religion as it stands in the service of life, irrespective of name, rite, or the special roof that serves for shelter. The Robert Frost poem, "Mending Wall," is a perfect parable of our day when men of all sects have discovered that

> "Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
> That sends the frozen ground swell under it,
> And makes gaps even two can pass abreast."

Old walls are tumbling down; no religious man to-day thinks solely, much less supremely, of his own particular communion, save as a part of the Church Universal. Already there have been reunions and amalgamations, and no doubt there will be others in times not far away. No one wants uniformity, but unity in variety—unity in behalf of verity, in behalf of richness, fullness, and realization. There need be no surrender of faith, no betrayal of loyal-

ties, no breaking of old ties, since all the good that all possess will make for the enrichment of all. Our principles, if they are true, must surely be reconcilable, if only by way of paradox. Where there is a will to fellowship, the yearning of the religious heart for fuller life will yet find a way over all barriers that divide—

> "Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
> That wants it down."

Eighth, and moving in and out amid the facts, forces, and issues of this stupendous time, with its lengthening vistas and lifting skies, haunting the hearts of men while baffling their minds, is One like unto the Son of Man, serene, radiant, benignant, most real where the need is most acute, most endearing where men are most adventurous in behalf of a better, fairer world to be. The advent of Jesus into the life of our generation, his presence reflected in the sensitive mirror of its art—in drama, poetry, fiction, simultaneously in many lands and languages—is a most amazing phenomenon, not to be accounted for as a fad. More lives of Christ have been written in our era than in all the ages since he walked here in the flesh, as if men were unable to find themselves,

or any clue to life, until they somehow find his place in the order of things. Even those who have broken with the Church tradition and thrown it aside find themselves confronted by the personality of Jesus and fascinated by his life, enthralled by his persistence and power while rejecting dogmas about him. It is extraordinary, the more so at a time when the whole tendency of thought is to interpret life in terms of the impersonal, if not the mechanical; as extraordinary as of old when he entered where the door was shut for fear of his foes, bringing rebuke to a trembling doubt and blessing to a groping faith.

## IV

Where these forces, tendencies, and movements met and mingled, the modern mind had its origin, born of the breath of God blowing through the world; and it is impossible for it to think in the terms of former times. It means not only a new insight and outlook, but a new mood, a new spirit, a new method of approach —old truths have a new setting and old words a new meaning. The vision of God as the creative soul of the universe unveils a world of opening windows, cleansing fires, and baptizing

dews, in which Christ stands like the Angel in the Sun, his personality its master light of interpretation and his words like stars. The appeal to experience makes faith a fountain, not a cistern; and history a scroll of prophecy, no longer a black bible of pessimism—life dynamic, like a spring with infinite summers in its heart. The new sense of human solidarity asks for a gospel of salvation, not the mere salvage of a few from the wreck of a Divine failure. Thus in every way the old faith broadens, and grows, by virtue of its creative and expanding vitality, seeking the latest vision and the newest task; and he who has a living faith will know that faith in new forms.

Such, in bare outline, is the keyboard on which the new preaching is to play, and if it has been described rather starkly, it is for the sake of vividness. Agitation is inevitable, but God lives, and no precious thing will be lost, if we are heroic enough to follow Him who, on a holy eventide, "made as though he would have gone further." Living, thinking, toiling in the fellowship of the living Christ, we have nothing to fear, knowing that all truth belongs to the God of Truth, and that there is no schism between the last-found fact of science and the

old faiths and pieties of the heart. The new preachers do not defend the gospel; they know that it is the gospel that defends us from the lusts of the flesh, the vanity of life, and the fear of the grave. Their concern is to make Christ known to men, bringing art, literature, and the facts of science to his service, showing that he can do for men to-day what he did for men in the days of his flesh. They know that he stands within the shadow of the world's unrest, and one abiding reality, "in whom all things hold together"; and that in his fellowship men become masters of life and time and death. They know what the poet meant who wrote the lines—

> "Ah, Christ, it were enough to know
> That, brooding on the unborn things,
> Thou gatherest up the years that go,
> Like a hen's brood under her wings.
> The vision holds Thee, lip to lip,
> Close to our love and makes Thee ours."

While the new preaching is toiling in the midst of new visions of truth, it does not forget that the human heart is very old, almost as old as the hills whence cometh its help. Man has sought him out many inventions, but he has not made the smile of a babe more sweet, or salt tears less salty, since the first child

crowed in a cradle or the last mother wept by a tomb. Nor has the new knowledge hushed the cry of the soul for something beyond time and sense, something cleaner than our minds, clearer than our vision, newer than the buds of spring, fresher than the song of a bird at dawn; something which baffles all but the pure in heart and the doers of the will of God. These old needs are as urgent to-day, and will be to-morrow and to-morrow, as they were when Solomon reigned in all his glory, or the Son of Man lodged with the fishermen by the sea.

# THE NEW CONGREGATION

# THE NEW CONGREGATION

It seems to me as if, were I a layman in these days when some doctrine had got loose as it were into the wind and was being blown across the common and up and down the streets, I should go to church, not wanting any minister to give me an oracular answer to all the questions which had been started by it, which I should not believe if he did give it, but hoping that out of his sermon I might refresh my knowledge of Christ, get Him, His nature, His work, and His desire for me once more clear before me, and go out more ready to see this new disputed truth of the moment in His light and as an utterance of Him.—*Phillips Brooks.*

## I

ABOARD an East Coast train from Scotland to London, in days of war, a British officer sat opposite me reading a book. Having endured a lecture of mine in Edinburgh, he made himself known, and we talked as only men talked in those days when the soul of man was near the surface. As he left the car at York he gave me the book in his hand, about which I had been curious, saying that it was worth my while to read it, because it would show me the state of mind of many earnest men who still go to church, and how they are unable to follow what they hear in the pulpit. They want to

believe, he said, but they cannot; and with a cheery smile and a wave of the hand he vanished into the night.

The book was entitled "The Diary of a Church-Goer," and it proved to be of such interest and charm that my favorite story had to wait, just when Father Mapple was in the middle of his sermon on Jonah and the Whale—such is the patient courtesy of great books. There was no name on the title-page, but a new edition, issued later, told me that it was written by the late Lord Courtney of Penwith, whose habit it was to jot down his meditations and impressions, and even his criticisms, when he returned from church. No mention is made of preaching; if the diarist listened to sermons at all, they must have been satisfying, or else he refrained from comment—as Pepys did not. But he does tell in what ways he was helped or repelled by the service—how, for example, a lovely Easter day was spoiled by the use of the Athanasian Creed, which crashed into his thought like a stone thrown through the window. Its "pretentious pedantry," alien alike to the grace of the gospel and the wonder of a spring morning, so angered him that he did not partake of Holy Communion. Yet at

times, he knew not how or why, through lines in the service so familiar that he could anticipate the reader, there broke a light as from heaven, and his heart was happy.

All through the Diary—rich in thought and fragrant with brooding beauty—a noble and earnest mind is trying to bring itself to answer one question, "What have I come to think of Christ?" He touches upon many profound themes—fate, prayer, providence, destiny—but always he comes back to the question of Christ; and always with an honest desire to enter into the mystery of One whom he loves and seeks to obey. He takes it up, lays it down, and takes it up again, feeling that if he can place Jesus in the order of things, then everything else will fall into its place. There is no question about following Jesus—so much is plain; but he wants to know who it is that has won such a throne in the heart of man. How is he related to us, standing so close to us while towering so high above us, and how is he related to God of whom he compels us to think? He never quite makes up his mind; as often as he concludes that Jesus is only a man, albeit the noblest and purest of the sons of men, he begins to have misgivings.

It is a far cry from Lord Courtney, trying to make up his mind about Jesus in a vine-covered English church, to our tangled, crowded, hurrying, unworshipful age, speeding its way in a welter of flux and confusion, when "the word of the Lord is precious and there is no open vision." The mystery of Jesus which troubled his honest and reverent mind is still unsolved by many, alas, who have lost his habit of culture and piety, and to whom his rich religious sentiment is unknown; a multitude, in fact, who are wondering in their hearts what it is all about, and whether life itself has any spiritual meaning at all. Much has happened in the twenty-five years since Lord Courtney wrote; a storm of war has swept over us, hiding the face of God in a red mist and leaving in our hearts the ghastly memory of a Christian world bespattered with brother-blood. From what source none knows, a spirit has been released among us, pervasive if not persuasive, wild, restless, ruthless, realistic, rebellious, disillusioned, sad, making mock of chastity, reverence, restraint, and even truth itself. To a degree never known before, it is an age of complexity and perplexity, of mental turbulence, moral cynicism, and spiritual chaos, when the

highest life of man is fighting with its back to the wall. Man cannot long endure such an age without a great religion; yet his vision has grown dim, his sense of values is blurred, and his faith is out of focus.

## II

Yes, there is a new congregation, as there is in every new generation, in the flowering stream of years. It is as large as formerly, or nearly so, though profoundly confused and bewildered, and played upon by the subtle influences of an altered world. Men look up at us from the pews trying to believe, wanting to believe, and wondering why they do not think and feel about religion as their fathers did, unaware of what has happened in the back of their minds. Something is wrong; it is not often expressed, not even defined, but it is felt to be a loss and a thing to be feared. Old words have not the same meanings, old sanctions do not satisfy, old authorities do not command, the old scenery of faith has faded—they know not why. Without knowing it we have been swept into a new and strange time when old paths vanish, and we are inwardly unprepared for its upheavals and adventures.

Now, take thought. If an angel with a pen of light were to take a spiritual inventory of the minds of the people in our pews, what would the record reveal? A medley, no doubt, of the faiths, feelings, fears, hopes, and hauntings of a native religiousness, beyond which few ever go; mystic moods, moral edicts, relics of old magic, inarticulate longings, flashes of insight. In some, religion is a few things remembered from childhood; in others, a creed inherited or accepted in theory; in others, a grim sense of duty unlocking hidden reserves of courage; in others, a passing awareness, a moment of wonder when the soul trembles with awe; in others, a thing of rite and rote punctiliously performed; in others, a soft shield to blunt the raw edges of reality; in others, a wisp of wistfulnesses held together by a tenuous tie. In all of us, whether by lack or by loss, religion is more a quest than a conquest; a yearning rather than a realization; more occasional than continuous; less an insight than an instinct. As Stevenson said of Burns, in the new congregation folk are not so much devoted to religion as haunted by it.

But when, it may fairly be asked, has it not been so? Certainly in the matter of deep reli-

gious life, and the number of those avowed to its quest and culture, our age is no better or worse than other ages. The elect in any age are few—a "remnant," in the old prophetic phrase—and they are the salt of any society or century. But in the majority, in any age, religion has always been more latent than living. It is easy to exaggerate the Ages of Faith, as they are named, forgetting that their fame is due to a few shining figures who went singing through the world. By the same fact, the doubts heard to-day on every side—like the sex talk now rife—may be the fruit of a new frankness which speaks out what in other ages was kept secret, or uttered in a whisper. Still, when all allowance has been made, no one can deny that our age is strangely astray in its own life, baffled and confused. If our fathers asked how good is the most that we can mean by the word "God," their sons inquire how real is the least we can mean by it. Above all, we miss to-day the touch of rhapsody which is, fundamentally, the thing man asks his religion to give him.

To describe in detail the facts and forces of our time as they play upon and modify the inner life of faith is not my purpose here, even

if it were within my competence. Rather my wish is to interpret, as in a sketch, the mood and temper of the age, and the echoes of its life in the secret places of the soul, which make spiritual reality seem less real to us. Our intellectual difficulties, about which we make so much ado, though real enough, and greatly increased for many by the flood of new knowledge, are manifestly less a cause than a consequence of our dimness of vision. For, in the nature of things, such difficulties must always attach to our highest faith. It would be odd indeed if all were clear shining, if no shadows of mystery gathered about the ultimate issues of life. But our real difficulty to-day lies elsewhere, in our neglect of the life of the soul, whereby inward growth has not kept pace with outward advance and change. Nor is it a fact to be wondered at, remembering the conditions of life to-day and the little time and care and effort devoted to "the things that belong to our peace."

## III

Not only is the world too much with us, soon and late, as a good and wise seer gave us warning; alas, it is too much within us. An

obsessive externality besets us, subduing the soul, if not actually submerging it under the sheer weight and mass and medley of things. If Emerson could say in his quiet day that "things are in the saddle and ride mankind," it is ten times truer to-day, when luxuries have become necessities and life is littered and cluttered. It is not so much a materialism of thought as a suffocating materialism of fact which overwhelms us. At no time has man had such command of the forces of nature, the resources of invention, and the fruits of industry. The visible, tangible world has become a home, as, to the masses of men, it has never been before. What wonder that our grasp of things unseen is feeble, fumbling, faltering, in the presence of so much obtrusive reality—how could it be otherwise?

For better, for worse—no doubt for both—we live in the age of the machine; and if we have not deeply pondered its meaning for religion, it is just because its haste and hum are so much with us. Yet, imperceptibly and increasingly it profoundly influences the inner life of man, altering its rhythm, until he is half ready to think himself a machine and nothing more. Wheels whirl about us, wings

whir above us, hammers ring in our ears, furnaces pant in our faces, traffic roars through cities of steel and smoke; and what befalls the sensitive, wistful human soul in the midst of it all? To an accompaniment of high speed and hideous noise, the world goes at a killing gait, which quickens every day, employing "improved means to reach unimproved ends," as Thoreau said; and it is well-nigh impossible for men to cultivate those arts and offices by which the soul is kept alive. Its drone and grind, its clash and clang and clatter invade the mind, and the still small voice is drowned in the jolt and jar and din. It is enough to tear the religiousness out of human nature, if such a thing were possible, and the wonder is that men have any inner life at all. Deafened by a bedlam of noise, driven by hurry, the folk in our pews do not find it easy to obey the old and wise injunction, so vital to our health of soul, "Be still, and know that I am God."

As if such an incessant assault and battery upon the soul were not enough, the spirit of the wheels has entered into society itself, which is now so organized—nay, so mechanized and regimented—as almost to obliterate the in-

dividual, or else make him only a cog.[1] So, inevitably, by an ever-present pressure of mass-movement and mass-suggestibility, men are made to feel that our tiny lives are no more than a "human series" struck off a single pattern; and the sense of the dignity and worth of man is erased. The feeling of human insignificance and futility grows betimes, in the appalling impersonalization of our many-

[1]Of the soul of man under mechanism much has been written of late, notably a searching survey and interpretation called "Mysteries of the Soul," by Mueller Freienfels, of Germany. It is a valuable book, in spite of its trite and tedious anti-church bias, betraying an amazing ignorance of the best Christian thought, past and present. Its longest chapter is entitled "The Americanization of the Soul," meaning by the soul "the manifold living reciprocal reactions between the self and the universe." Quantification, mechanization, standardization are its traits; putting quantity above quality, exalting technique as an end in itself, and a stuffy, terrifying standardization—the result being externality and superficiality. This type of life, the author holds—not critically, but in admiration—has reached its highest development in America; but it is in fact a universal phenomenon, or will shortly be so, because it is spreading to all lands. No doubt it has its good side—it lifts the standard of living, so far as comforts are concerned, but alas, it levels much else, erases individuality, and blights many a white flower of the spirit. One need not accept such a thesis in detail, or without protest, in order to see that it does describe a type of life which dominates America and is beginning to run like a steam-roller across the earth.

faceted civilization, no less than under the awful depths and distances of the cosmic order. City life, especially—false in its ideals, furious in its pace, remote from the old nature mysticisms, in which faith grows like a flower—tells terribly upon the soul, both by its mass-mindedness and its crowded loneliness. Every day it becomes more difficult to think of God in terms of personalness, and as that faith fades all religion falls to a lower octave, prayer is unsatisfying if not impossible, and the spiritual intimacies of the Bible are an unintelligible jargon. Again, my point is that our paucity of faith is due, not to the unreality of spiritual truth, as in their distraction men are tempted to think, but to a type of mind and way of living which blind us to its beauty and blessing.

It need not be recited in detail how such a state of mind reacts upon religion; we all feel it profoundly, now in defiance, now in dismay. Nor can we be unaware, if we look at our times, of how it came to be. Our generation has seen a shift of emphasis, so vast that it is not unlike a geological change, from spiritual ideals to economic realities, from liberty to wealth; and it makes "the dear City of God," whereof the prophets dreamed, as unreal as a mirage.

Every day the tension of life tightens, as the struggle for existence becomes more intense and exacting. Weaker men are pushed downward; abler men find it harder to rise, and the meaning of life is lost in the scramble for the means of living. Good men and true in our pews, living in the thick of things, at grips with brute forces, facing heavy odds—less able, apparently, than women to hold inconsistencies in mind—are in bitter trial of soul, appalled by the deficit between the faiths of the heart and the facts of life. They do not see how the ideals of Jesus can be put into effect in such a world, and so they either give up entirely, or else regard religion as a frail and lovely thing, as ineffable as it is impotent, in the rough world of affairs.

Alas, eager, wistful eyes are no longer turned toward the unseen and eternal, as in days of old when man was more solitary and God more real. Nobody is alone to-day; the earth has become a whispering gallery where everything is heard, a hall of mirrors where nothing is hidden, and we live with the windows up. The life of humanity has never been so interesting, so full of glittering events, and the whole of it piles in upon us pell mell, whether we will or

no. Every part of the world knows about every other part; all its busy doings, from the debates in the League of Nations to the heart-tragedies of the city slums, is the talk of a noisy, gossipy neighborhood, in which world-end peoples and ideas have been drawn together, jammed together, and have not yet learned to live together. A vast flood, fed from all the watersheds of the world, rolls by us, rolls over us, bearing upon its bosom the wreckage of old provincialism and local prejudices, old ideas of morals, old modes of life, old creeds and customs, swept together in mad confusion. So, naturally, we see a loosening of old ties, a letting down of bars, followed, often, by open anarchy. With easy logic men argue that, since old ideas have been uprooted and swept away, therefore no ideals are rooted in reality, and that each may adopt what happens to fit his fancy. Also, since all creeds are equally good and equally bad, if not equally futile, none are worthy of deep devotion, and one may conform or not to old usages. The result is indifferentism, as pervasive as it is paralyzing, robed in the garb of liberality and tolerance, mistaking an absence of thought for largeness of mind.

Life, to-day, is in little fragments, cut up into bits, specialized in thought and research, no less than in industry; there is no vision of the whole. Analysis we have in plenty, but we stop short of synthesis, if indeed it is obtainable at all, except it be by some vast collective collaboration of mind. In such a bewildering disarray, as of the stones of a temple yet unbuilt, religion, as the reaction of man to the whole of the universe in which he so inconspicuously dwells, is filmy and dim. Yet it is more than ever a necessity, if by religion we mean an intuition of union with the whole which gives unity and meaning to all the parts. Our reaction to the universe is vivid enough, but too confusing for definition, too overwhelming for formulation. Our failure to focus the new knowledge in a philosophy reacts, in turn, upon our faith, inducing a spiritual inferiority complex, and we fall between two stools. In its lack of unity, not a little of our preaching reflects the chaos of the age. Either it is so much of the age, so dyed in its colors, as to be unable to lead men beyond the timely to the eternal, or else so remote from the age as to lack all contact with it, save by way of compensation and escape.

Again, to say it once more, our lack lies not in too much emphasis upon the intellect, but in too little use of those arts and laws by which the inner life is renewed and faith is quickened, deepened, enlarged, and empowered. But there, alas, is the rub. Spiritual meditation, by which a larger unity may be found, is almost unknown in our generation, for lack of time, as well as of technique, to practice it. Prayer, in its higher reach and range, is all but a lost art among us. Not religion alone, but all our higher quests, have serious rivals, as the alluring variety of life absorbs, excites, distracts, and exhausts. Where, fifty years ago, society centered in the church, a hundred new interests entice, a hundred new activities invite.[1] If

[1]In the meantime, all is not well with the Church, as witness such a book as "Has the Church Failed?" by Kenneth Ingram, to name no other; a striking survey by a layman of Anglo-Catholic affinities of the appalling facts about institutional religion to-day, Catholic and Protestant alike. The situation is nothing short of tragic, and if the author avoids the almost overwhelming temptation to caricature—notably in his description of the clerical mind, a page which one reader pondered with chastened humility—his criticism of the narrowness, ignorance, bigotry, complacency, and stupidity of the Church is all the more effective on that account. Also, as befits a practical layman, he offers a definite and constructive program, looking toward a real catholicity of faith and fellowship, for which he pleads with a largeness of mind and earnestness of spirit which cannot go unheeded.

men go to church, it is as often a soporific as a stimulus, and the burning visions of the preacher float into minds hurried for time, harried by secular cares, or else too weary to dream dreams of their own. Again, how could it be otherwise? To many in our pews, whose lips are sealed by respect, the glowing vision of Christian faith is an overbelief, if not a fourth dimension—a thing which one may argue exists, but which is unreal. Others remain in the church, as the thing to do, held by memory and habit, repeating the creed in every iota, when God is not even real enough to be doubted. When they hear on the golf links, or read in a paper, that recent research has upset the basis of old beliefs, they forget a faith which was never real. Yet all is not lost. In the new congregation, as in the old, there are faithful souls who keep the faith amid all change and chaos, without whom the heart of the preacher would turn to dust.

## IV

As for the newest congregation, in our colleges and universities, it reflects the confusion of the age in religion, as in other things, though with a more vivid candor. There is a bristling

array of question marks, but no common basis of thought, of aspiration, of action; and, of course, no background. There is no "average student" at whom our efforts can be directed; we must deal with many who, religiously, are up in the air, and many who are thoughtless and do not care; those who hold "the faith" and those who smile at it. Vast numbers are from irreligious homes, or homes religiously indifferent, and nothing in college alters their attitude. Others—a very large group—endured religious rites and customs as long as they were at home, but sloughed them off when they left. With the craven conformity of youth they follow the *mores* and modes of their clan; everything, from caps to catchwords, is fixed by edict of their set.

After all deductions are made for the two groups just named, there are at least three other classes of students, one being a goodly company of young folk who are in no wise disturbed in their inherited faith by their studies or their social life. The faith of their fathers, alike in its excellences and its limitations, is their faith, and they stand by it. Too often they are forgotten entirely, due to the queer notion that nobody can think straight

about religion in these days, or think at all without twisting his mind into all sorts of knots. Others, usually from strict orthodox homes, are sorely troubled, unable to adjust the faith of the past to the new world-view and way of thinking into which they are plunged. Many tide over their difficulties by discovering that it is the form of the old faith that is inadequate, not its truth. But not a few renounce religious faith with a finality which determines the issue, influenced often by teachers who are in the same state of mind and who vent their animus. They either throw faith to the winds, or yield to the hedonism of disillusionment, or strike the cynic pose, compounded of conceit and contempt; as when a girl said, with devastating scorn, "Religion is nothing but a chloroform mask into which the weak and unhappy stick their faces!" They are an easy prey to the glib, garish, flippant, bitter slanginess of mind now so much in vogue: blinded by the tragic dullness of clever ideas which hide the truth.

A final group, not large but increasing, is made up of young folk whose faith finds focus, fellowship, and fulfillment in the person of Jesus. To this group the religion of Jesus is at

once a challenge and an adventure, and they are deeply concerned not only with its intellectual justification, but also with its practical personal and social uses. The honesty and courage with which they face its daring moral meanings, making radical changes in their own way of living, make the heart beat faster. They have a fine scorn of religious bigotry, racial rancor, and social injustice and are vowed to the quest of a better and more benign human order. To be sure, the real test of their faith will come later, when they must face the darker aspects of experience, torn between distracting interests and conflicting loyalties. Yet they are so intelligent in their devotion, so clear in their vision of the values incarnated in the life and character of Jesus, that apostasy is unthinkable. Of course, one may not measure such things with any degree of accuracy, but some of us have the feeling that there is more vital religion in our college communities than in our churches.

At times one wonders whether the sophisticated modern mind, so wise in its own estimate, so emancipated, so self-conscious in its self-knowledge, so clever and so capable, can ever really enter into the simplicity, the humility,

the profound wisdom and childlike wonder of the mind of Jesus. Yet surely it is not in vain that we look to our universities—cities of the mind, homes of culture—for a leadership of men and women who have sound minds in sound bodies, who value moral integrity and the worth of spiritual ideals, and who unite individual initiative, social imagination, and personal responsibility in the service of the common good. Nay, more; if the history of the past is any prophecy of the future, we may hope to see the beacon of a new spiritual adventure aglow in our centers of culture, as the mighty movements of Wycliffe, Wesley, and Newman came forth from the mother bosom of Oxford.

## V

Such, in a swift survey, are some of the elements which enter into the mood of our generation in respect to religion, as it is felt by the people in our pews. Is our age irreligious? No, though it may seem so on the surface, if in our dismay at its changes we forget the things that abide. Further back and deeper down there are movements making for a fairer, finer life, a broader thought, a deeper

sympathy, a wider range of reconciliation; fresh currents clearing away much ancient silt. One does not forget the sensitiveness of Hardy, the pity of which Galsworthy is an apostle, the dawning vision of a juster and more joyous world, and the vow in the soul of the race to make an end of war. No one of us would go back one generation, or five, or ten, notwithstanding the ills that beset us. Old evils which Francis and Luther and Wesley took for granted are no longer tolerated among us. The days that lie ahead will see an unprecedented advance in banishing ignorance, indigence, disease, injustice, and pain.

Yet something is amiss; something not satisfied by our humanitarian zeal in which pity and skill are blended in the service of man. Our new knowledge has taught us much betimes, but it has also deepened the mystery of being, making all the old issues of faith poignantly acute, despite our efforts at evasion. Man is master of more realms than ever before; yet he is baffled by the riddle of life, beshadowed by its bereavements, broken by its tragedy. In the midst of amazing triumphs, he knows the stain of sin, the torment of dismay, the terror of frustration, as he did in the

days of Ikhnaton, or Sophocles, and of Saul of Tarsus. For all his self-sufficiency, he feels the futility of life without some spiritual vision to give it meaning, and in the darkness of death he cries out for the Everlasting Arms as he sinks back into the unknown. Things do not satisfy, speed does not arrive; the "little, infinite soul" has its rights and demands.

It is a tangled, troubled world in which we preach and our people listen, its life woven of good and ill, where men and women are illumined by love, blighted by passion, entrapped by intrigue, exalted by sacrifice, glorified by courage, as they were when the Vedic poets wrote. It needs the gospel of Christ, told in simple words and incarnated in lives of grace and truth; a gospel more gentle than its gentilities, more reasonable than its rationalism, more human than its humanism, more practical than its pragmatism, more real than its realism, and profounder than all its philosophies. It is the world for which Christ died, and in which he lives evermore, and in its noisy, murky foundry a bell is somehow being cast which shall ring his praise alone.

# 8 THE NEW STRATEGY

# THE NEW STRATEGY

Preaching is the art of making a sermon and delivering it? Why, no, that is not preaching. Preaching is the art of making a preacher and delivering that. Preaching is the outrush of soul in speech. Therefore, the elemental business in preaching is not with the preaching, but with the preacher. It is no trouble to preach, but a vast trouble to construct a preacher. What, then, in the light of this, is the task of a preacher? Plainly this, the amassing of a great soul, so as to have something worth while to give—the sermon is the preacher up to date.—*Bishop Quayle.*

## I

St. Paul sought to be all things to all men, seeking thereby to win men to his Master, not by compromise, but by sympathy and understanding. So to-day we must find God where he finds us, reading his nature in our deepest need, and so interpret his will and way to the mind of our time. Ages differ, alike in insight and expression, and the issues of one period seem alien to the next. The gap which divides us from the men of the last generation is so wide and deep that it is with difficulty we can imagine their agitations and alarms. None the less the gospel grows and abides, unfold-

ing depths and resources hitherto unrealized, if we have the insight and art to interpret it.

It is in large part, though not entirely, a matter of skill, strategy, and adaptation of method; and no one will deny that the conditions of life in our age, especially in the crowded loneliness of our great cities, are a challenge to those who would interpret the things of the spirit. Life is so cluttered and jammed, so speeded-up betimes, and so smitten with the fever of haste as to make meditation and worship almost lost arts. Flashlight glimpses and spotlight thinking, in the rush of a busy day-by-dayness, make a kind of mind so jumpy and scrappy and scattered that a large part of the public lacks the mental concentration, if not the capacity, to follow sustained thought; and that state of fact creates a changed atmosphere for preaching. For one thing, it makes expository preaching, so fruitful in other days, well-nigh impossible, at least in America, where life moves to the rhythm of motors, movies, and jazz. Such preaching must of necessity assume some knowledge of the Bible, in respect to which most of our hearers are ignorant, and proud of the fact, count-

ing it a little gray sin to be coddled, lest they be deemed too pious.

The art of preaching has fallen, not upon evil days, but upon other days, demanding all that a man has of ingenuity and acumen. It is most interesting to study the popular preacher of to-day, in contrast with such men as Beecher, Brooks, and Joseph Parker, to whose ministries multitudes flocked in days gone by. The preacher of to-day must win by other arts, one of which is the knack of "artistic repetition," in obedience to the wisdom of "Alice in Wonderland," where we are told, "What I tell you three times is true." One of the most famous preachers of our generation employed this method, taking one truth, sometimes a single Bible word or phrase, saying one thing in at least three different ways, suitable to as many kinds of mind; and it was a joy to see him do it. Obviously, if we are to preach to the motion-picture mind, we must preach in pictures, as Beecher trained himself to do, making his sermons picture galleries of the gospel, as Shakespeare put his scenery into his poetry. One day he wished to show our right of boldness of access to God, and wrote an argument to that effect, but erased it and

painted a picture instead which no one can forget, "God is not a thunderstorm to be approached under an umbrella."

My purpose here, however, is quite different, and goes deeper than any form of art, since each preacher must employ the artistry best suited to his gifts and use it in his own way. If people are to reject Christianity, as many are doing to-day, they ought at least to know what it is they are casting aside so glibly, what it means and what it has cost, whence it came and whither it would lead us. Most of them are actually illiterate as to the basic ideas and attitudes of our faith and have the most distorted notions of its teachings, due to no fault of their own; they have not been taught. If dogma is truth packed for transportation, as Phillips Brooks said, it must be unpacked and made real and vivid and usable in the life of to-day.[1] If one may put it simply in five words,

[1]It is amazing to read "The Collapse of the New England Theology," by Foster, and the supplementary monograph by Dr. George Gordon, entitled "Humanism in New England Theology." It was a wooden theology, remote from life and based upon a profound and tragic mistake about God; and yet it was preached with such persuasion, and such art of exposition, from Edwards to Park, that it dominated the New England mind for a hundred and fifty years—so much so that the farmers on

together they will outline what would seem to be the method of approach to the confused mind of our time—Translation, Reconciliation, Interpretation, Exploration, Coöperation.

## II

Every age has its dialect, its accent, its manner of speech, in religion as in art and letters, and the gospel must be so preached, as at Pentecost, that each new age may hear the words of life in its own tongue. Jesus knew supremely how to translate the "truths that wake to perish never" out of the abstract into the living, concrete speech of his time, using old and simple and lovable things to make his meaning plain; and the common people heard him gladly. The necessity for this divine art of translation was forced upon us anew during the World War, when we preached to the vast multitudes of men swept together in the armies. Everywhere one went in the camps and hospitals the report was the same, "The old stuff will not go," which meant that the men simply

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the rocky hillsides knew and discussed its definitions and distinctions. Surely, if such a theology could be so expounded in the pulpit, the clearer insight of to-day into the gospel of Christ ought to be preached with an overwhelming winsomeness and power of appeal.

did not understand the language of the Church. Only a few who had been trained in the Church knew what the preachers were talking about; to the rest it was an unknown tongue, unreal and unintelligible.

In those days, in the after-meetings the congregations talked back at the preachers, and it was often a terrifying experience—showing how much preaching missed the mark by going over the heads of its hearers. One Sunday evening, after my service in the City Temple in London, I went down to conduct an after-meeting in the Alwych Theater, at that time used by the Australian army for religious gatherings. As I had not heard the sermon to be discussed, I asked that some one give me an account of it. Whereupon a British Tommy gave me a synopsis of the sermon, and I can still see his big blue eyes and hear his soft voice as he told me, point by point, what the preacher had said. The subject was, "The Grace of God," and Tommy closed his account, with exquisite courtesy, in these words: "The minister told us that the grace of God is plentiful, sufficient for all need, and near at hand, but he did not tell us what the grace of God is; perhaps you, sir, will be good enough to do

that." Think of such a question being fired, point-blank, with no warning at all! Never had I asked myself that question in my life, having used the word "grace," like other great words, without thinking of what it meant. The old saying of St. Augustine flashed into my mind when some one asked him such a question, "I know until you ask me; when you ask me, I do not know."

Before I could reply a tall New Zealander stood up and expressed amazement that Tommy did not know what the grace of God is. Fortunately, he proceeded to tell us, which saved me much embarrassment. The grace of God, he said, is to the moral and spiritual world what the mysterious, ever-active power of recovery, of healing, of renewal is in nature. When a man is "pinked"—the slang for being wounded—all the forces of healing in the body are rushed to that spot to repair the damage. No physician ever heals a disease; all he does is to help nature do her work. Thus wounds are healed, as fields trampled by the greed and folly of man become green again. Similarly, in the spiritual world, a power of healing, of recuperation, or re-creation is always at work, if we yield to it and know how to work with it.

And that abundant power, he said, as accessible as it is inexhaustible, is the grace of God. At any rate he made more than a thousand men—bronzed by war and weather—see that what the preacher had talked about was not an empty word, but a reality near at hand ready to help and heal.

For more than an hour we went on, taking the great words of faith and translating them into actual life, passing from the grace of God to the word "God" itself. As all agreed, the word "God" may mean everything or nothing; and often, alas, it means nothing after the childish idea of a Big Man in the sky has faded out of thought. One frequently finds it so, especially in group discussions with young folk, where one learns how little meaning the old words of religion have in young minds; as when a college boy said that "the word 'God' is a little watch of a word, which only ticks when it is wound up." No wonder it is used so cheaply, less as an irreverence than as an irrelevance, like an old coin worn smooth, its image and superscription erased. After all, as a Canadian pointed out, only a new vision of God can fill the old word with rich content, as it did in the life of Jesus, who flooded it with

light and love and wonder—filled it with haunting overtones and ineffable echoes. Such a vision, he said, we must seek in our day, linking the word "God" not only with the law within and the starry sky above, but with the song of the pioneers, all thinkers in quest of truth, all workers in behalf of a finer social order; finding God to be the Unity embracing all we know and the direction in which our purest dreams point. Otherwise, he added, even the noblest word in the language of religion will lose its luster for pulpit and pew alike and become, as it has for so many, only a faded metaphor upon our lips.

Next we took up the word "Salvation," an Australian insisting that it ought to be dropped from the vocabulary of religion for a decade, so unreal are the ideas associated with it. He went on to say that in a universe where not an atom of matter or a volt of energy is ever lost we must redefine what we mean by the salvation of man, if it is to have any sense in it. A number of synonyms were suggested —Adjustment, Fellowship, Release, Character, and the like—until some one quoted a sentence from Clutton-Brock, and it seemed to clear the air, "Salvation is seeing that the universe is

good, and becoming a part of that goodness." A doughboy, who had drifted in, thought we needed a new version of the word "Faith"—that is, unless some special virtue attaches to the ability to accept the most incredible ideas. He declined, he said, to follow the White Queen in the fairy story, who practiced believing impossible things a little while before breakfast every morning, as a kind of "daily dozen." He was answered from the gallery by a lad who recalled the words of Donald Hankey—killed on the Somme—as describing what we really mean by faith, "Religion is betting your life that there is a God." An air-raid warning cut the meeting short, but as we joined in the Lord's Prayer at the close all of us felt that it had been time well spent.

The scene from war time, when the soul was near the surface, gives us a hint, if nothing more, of how the truths of faith must be translated into the idiom of to-day, if they are to be real and vivid. If we suffer some loss in the old associations of words long used, it is more than made good by freshness of insight and a sense of reality. Such was the method of Jesus, who employed none of the old words of religion. He did not even use the word "Re-

ligion," it would seem, but always the word "Life" instead—preaching on the hillside or by the sea, using the vivid speech of every day, at times even its slang, to make his truth real. He was so wise that he was simple, and so simple that he was wise, taking timely topics if only to make the Eternal near. By such artless arts he made men aware of the near-neighborliness and far-friendliness of God the Father, as his new preachers must do in the accent and imagery of our far-off age.

## III

Upon the new preachers is laid the old ministry of reconciliation, just now sorely needed as between the younger generation and their elders. Time out of mind, to go no further back than Romeo and Juliet, this old feud has been the theme of bitter tragedy; and it may be so in our day if we are not wise. Like all other things, it was made acute by the World War, which left the world neurotic, erotic, and in many ways idiotic. Old restraints are thrown lightly aside, old standards upset, old confidences challenged. It is rather trying when our young realists insist upon emptying the garbage can in the drawing-room in order to

"see life," but we must be patient, hoping all things while enduring much. At best the mood of the younger set is an engaging sauciness; at worst, a downright impudence. It is the way of youth to shock, startle, and amaze, mistaking audacity for originality and contortions for inspiration. None the less, it is a mistake to think that it is not serious just because it refuses to be solemn and goes pirouetting in the van of the angels.

Alas, nowhere is the breach between youth and age wider to-day than in matters of religion, and there is need of tact as well as insight. The estrangement of young folk from the church is obvious, and especially the young folk in our colleges and universities. They go from the village church to the university, where they are trained in the newer point of view and way of thinking. When they return the Church seems antiquated, its gospel remote and unreal; they feel that the pastor is stodgy, belated, fossilized, and they are not slow in saying so. The pastor, in turn, often thinks them careless, godless, flippant, irreverent, and many parents half agree with him. It is all unnecessary, if not disastrous, in that it may mean the loss to the service of the

Church of a generation of educated youth. Lack of faith in youth, lack of insight to discern behind its fantastic talk the old wistful need of God is fatal. Besides, youth has a case, and it behooves us to "listen-in" betimes, trying to understand the point of view of a new generation, the while we seek to interpret its eager, joyous life in terms of the everlasting gospel. Hear now a faithful transcript of the mood of a gifted and high-minded young man, honorable alike in his character and his achievement, as he recalled his austere upbringing in New England:

> It is like a nightmare to think of it. Sunday was as dismal as a funeral. Joy was a sin, an idea an agony. Every happy impulse and instinct was trampled upon, suppressed as if it were a thing vile and shameful. God was a big policeman always on watch with a club. Facts about sex were unclean, and I grew up in ignorance of my own nature, save for such information as I bootlegged in the back alley. If one asked a human question, the old extinguisher was brought out and applied. All inquiry about religion was squelched forthwith, as if one had touched a taboo. We had to swallow it whole, willy-nilly, take it or leave it. Art was a blasphemy and science an invention of the devil.
>
> No, it's all off. I'm done. They got God and the devil mixed. They put the war over on us, but they can't get their rotten religion across. They think we are a wild, godless set. It may be

> so, if they mean their petty, fussy little God, who is harder to please than a spinster school-mistress. We are not irreligious, but we want reality. What is the church going to do about it? No preacher over forty can speak our language, and the young fellows shy at the pulpit. No, I don't talk this to the old folk—they would not understand.

There was more of like sort, only more stinging, showing how bitterly he had reacted against the older view, repression rebounding in rebellion. "They would not understand" —that is the tragedy on the other side, and it is heart-searching and moving, revealing a chasm which Christian strategy must bridge, if youth and age are to unite, as Meredith said they must, in building the temple of a more adequate faith. The new preaching may well take a leaf from Meredith, who knew how to fling a delicate network of sympathies across the gulf which separates the ends of life, showing how instinctive wisdom may be added to trained intelligence in the service of a larger truth. In this matter he was more successful than Stevenson, in whose audacious defense of the ideals of youth we are always aware of his own revolt against the religious traditions of his home. One wonders what the elder Stevenson thought of the "Vailima Prayers," if he ever

read them, and especially the one beginning, "Give us courage and gaiety and the quiet mind"; he in whose grim faith gaiety had no place. But, where Stevenson failed, Meredith triumphed, by bringing youth and age together, and by the discovery, one of the happiest ever made, that "wit and passions join to rear the temple of the credible God." Neither the severity of age nor the impulsiveness of youth, alone, can build the temple. Only as the trophy of many insights, many affirmations, many adventures, may we hope to arrive at the truth as between youth and age, and equally between the heart of the ancient faith and the noble and brilliant agitations of our new day.[1]

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[1]Apparently we can expect no help from our younger intelligentsia, who are the victims of moral cynicism, spiritual defeatism, and every sort of mania. Their poems, stories, essays, and dramas reveal a delicate, if rather erratic, artistry, but as interpretations of life they are a failure and a foolishness. Their pages—witty, gritty, flashy—portray the sour humor and brittle pathos of futility. Short gray sentences, clouded by confusion, heavy with mockery, celebrate death, dirt, and despair. They solve no problem; they achieve no serenity. For years we have listened to a dirge sung by old young men, ridiculously sad, sex-obsessed, spiritually bankrupt, having no moral standards, no courage, no hope. They mope and snivel and whine, bereft of vision, mad for

The story of Samuel might have been written yesterday, it fits the facts of our day so aptly. Suddenly, in a rather violent fit of modernism, the people told the venerable judge, "Behold thou art old," and, more cruel still, "Even thy sons walk not in thy ways." It was a blunt, brutal blow, and the old man awoke to the fact that all that he stood for—his order, his method, his way of thinking—was being voted out of date. New ideas were in the air. Kings were the latest fashion, and

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pleasure, but strangers to joy. Their poetry is a plaintive minor music, mingled of query and protest, and their wisdom consists in saying things backwards. Too skeptical to hold the profound faiths by which the race has lived, they are the dupes of the most grotesque credulities—sheer superstitions, as much so as alchemy and old magic. What is the matter with America, the land of youth and hope, that its artistic life should issue in frustration and futility, as if the earth were a pesthouse and life a disease? Something is wrong with our educational process when it ends in such a debacle, betraying all the higher interests of humanity in a pitiful spiritual sterility and obfuscation. Surely we have a right to expect something beyond sophistical stupidity and cackling cleverness, remote from the sagacities of living wisdom, making wise cracks in the face of God and dancing in the primrose path of cocktails and kisses. There is no help for to-day and no hope for to-morrow in such an attitude, no constructive suggestion, no gleam of the leadership we so much need in behalf of a better ordering of society and a juster, clearer, more authentic interpretation of life: nothing—just a leer, a jeer, and a jug of gin.

Samuel did not believe in kings. It was useless to argue that new methods do not cure old ills; "the people refused to hearken to the voice of Samuel." Then follows a picture pathetic enough to melt the hardest heart: "and Samuel heard all the words of the people and rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord." The vision of that old man at his prayers, his head white and bent, his world falling to pieces, alone with his perplexity and his God, ought to haunt the heart of youth in every age.

In the home, in the church, in the state the generations clash; it is inevitable and a part of the human advance, "lest one good custom should corrupt the world." But it is not inevitable that it should be made as bitter as it often is for those who bear the brunt of it. God told Samuel to let the people have their way—one has more confidence in an answer to prayer when it does not merely confirm prejudice or predilection, as it often seems to do. Samuel did not sulk. He refused to be a Diehard. He obeyed his God with a dignity and grace forever memorable. He chose the new king, crowned him, led the shout in his honor, "and wrote it in a book." It was a noble valedictory, but while we admire his wise

and heroic spirit we must not be blind to the fine spiritual sportsmanship which a good man learned on his knees.

## IV

What is the root of religion, by which it outlives both its apologists and its antagonists, and defies each age afresh to discover and assess its secret? Through all changing fashions of thought, in the midst of all desolations and disasters, what is the constant and abiding reality upon which men rely? Some call it mysticism, some use other names; it does not matter how we describe it, since it is the one great human experience, as vivid to-day as in any age gone by. Perhaps it may be put in this way: Whenever men hunger and thirst after God and truly seek him, there is a response of peace and power; and by that token the soul lives. Vague and fleeting it may be, baffling words, but that experience is the bedrock of all religion, at once the basis of its faith and the fountain of its fellowship. In that primary experience the soul, acting as a unity, rises above itself and becomes spirit; it sees, knows, and sings. Many winds cannot blow out that light, nor can all the waters of the seven seas quench it.

Every man shares that profound experience in some degree, dimly or clearly, though he may not be aware of what it means and too shy to speak of it. In other words, all men are religious—mystics, if one prefers to put it so—however they may deny the fact and seek to hide it even from themselves. Yet they actually live in God, depend upon him, love him better than they know, and even in their doubts will not give him up, though they may not read aright the tokens of his life in their lives. Even the Saint—the adept in the art of intercourse with the Unseen—has no faculties or facts that all men do not possess in some measure; only he uses and interprets them differently. He rejoices in those vision-moments when the soul, set free, adventures beyond the forms of sense and by a swift sweep of intuition clutches at the whole rich meaning of life, whence it returns to its inmost depths enriched and restored. Other men fear those high moods, as if they were dupes, not knowing that by such insights the rational, social, and moral life is ennobled and made more stable. The Bible is everywhere busy directing attention to the unrecognized presence of God in the thoughts and impulses of men.

Nowhere do men need help and guidance as they do along the dim paths by which they seek to find God amid the mists and fogs of life. Of that hidden inner life—its devious ways, its delicate laws, its deep meanings—the preacher is an interpreter, alike by virtue of his insight and his office. As Arnold said of Emerson, he is "a friend and aider of those who would live in the spirit"; and unless he knows how to find his own way in the Land of the Spirit, he cannot be a leader of his fellow souls in their most sacred quest. If he fails here, he fails fatally, and no other art can atone for it. One reads the letters of Fenelon and Francis de Sales wishing that we had such an Office of Direction in our day, when it is so sorely needed. No study of psychology is enough; we want a softer, surer light. Yet who is sufficient for these things? What man of us, looking into his own heart, does not feel how utterly inadequate he is for such an office? What it means, and the yearning of men to be able to serve in the sanctuary, is told by a page from a chummy, charming letter from a priest of the Roman Church, as it fluttered down upon my desk, in which one feels the eager longing of a man to be a shepherd of souls:

> What you wrote about preaching recently makes me want to unburden my heart and ask you to help me. Are not my people like your people in their sins, their sorrows, and their need of Christ; and are we not brothers in His service? The walls of my study where I write are lined, up to the ceiling, with books of faith and vision, lives of the Saints full of light and power and joy. Their pages are like windows opening into heaven. Beyond those walls lies the vast Cathedral with its pillars, its arches, its pulpit, its high altar where, in my faith, the Body of our Lord is broken daily. To-morrow it will be thronged with thousands of souls, each walking a lonely way, each seeking balm for some hurt. When I look into their faces, knowing here a broken heart, there a blighted life, and yonder some one walking amid pitfalls—how it makes my heart ache! How can I interpret the visions of the Shining Ones to my people, lifting them out of the shadows into the light? Tell me how to preach, and God will bless us both!

Such is the business of preaching in every generation, to interpret the way and the will of God to man, finding his love in his law and lifting the human hurt to the Divine healing. Never has it been more difficult than it is to-day, owing to a schism between the head and the heart; a schism as unnatural as it is unnecessary, since if man is to win the truth it must be by the free and harmonious activity of all his finest powers. As a result of the divorce of science from mysticism, the critical

mind of to-day seems unable to accept what the human heart must believe, if it is to find health and hope. Not a few actually think that the inner life of faith and vision is an alien, if not an exotic, in a universe of iron law and energy—like a tropical flower trying to grow under an arctic sky. How strange, as if the moral law and the life of Jesus are not as real as pig iron and potash! Yet these twin activities of the human spirit have not only been put asunder, but set at war, leaving the impression that science gives us facts without values, and religion values without facts. It is an intolerable dualism, not only distressing but dangerous, and it may almost be said to be the crux of the whole question of religious faith in our day.

Here, then, is a challenge to the new preaching: to unite once more what God has joined together and man has put asunder, making two mighty forces friends, as they must be. For, manifestly, if great social ideals are ever to be realized, it must be by the power of a mystical faith using the facts and skill of science to organize a fraternal righteousness upon earth. Many of the older preachers—to whom we owe an unpayable debt—accepted

the results of scientific research, and found them rich in spiritual meaning. But the new preachers will go much further, since "nothing that keeps out thought is safe from thought, and truth defensive hath lost hold of God." They know that all human thought—in science no less than in religion—begins and ends in faith, and that all its achievements are so many confirmations of faith. But there is still a further step, hinted to us by Lowell in "The Cathedral," and if we do not take it to-day, it will surely be taken to-morrow:

> "Science was Faith once; Faith were Science now,
> Would she but lay her bow and arrow by
> And arm her with the weapons of her time."

Aye, "faith were science now" did we but see that we live in a universe that is all of a piece, divinely ordered and illumined; a dependable universe, in which law reigns in the far-off star, in the near-by atom, and, no less, in the deep soul of man. Sooner or later man will discover that the inner life of faith, vision, and power is also a realm of law, order, and beauty, where truth is the trophy of obedience and liberty is the fruit of discipline. Even now the new psychology is confirming one after another the old laws of the spiritual life,

learned by the mystics long ago, obedience to which sent Francis singing through the world and made Wesley a redeemer of England from rot and revolution. The power whereby they, and others of like daring adventure, transformed their times is with us still, once we know its laws and yield ourselves to it.

To that end the new preaching will take deep counsel of the Masters of the Spirit, who have charted its laws and moods and roads, the better to help men to know their own hearts. Led by such wise mentors, it will avoid all trace of magic, never mistaking the psychical for the spiritual, or the occult for the mystical, as so many do. To the sermon it will add symbol and sacrament, using every art, appealing to the eye, the ear, and every sense of the soul, knowing that the Reality which it seeks to express is beyond words and cannot be uttered in a Cult of Ideas alone. In all these ways the new worship will seek to bring the folk of our hurrying age, distracted and distraught, into the unity of the spirit and the bond of fellowship; that all may know together what none may learn alone and together become, in very truth, the Body of Christ, wearing his Seamless Robe—his Cross the

center of consecration and the sign of conquest.

## V

As a matter of strategy, if for no other reason, the new preaching must be inductive in its emphasis and approach. Inevitably so, because the whole spirit and method of thought in our day is inductive, and if we are to win the men of to-day to the truths of faith we must use the method by which they find truth in other fields. In the old days the text was a truth assumed to be true, and the preacher only needed to expound its meaning, deduce its lessons and apply them. Often enough a text was a tiny peg from which a vast weight of theology depended, and so long as men accepted both the text and the theology all went well. Of course, the old formula, "The Bible teaches, therefore it is true; the Church affirms, therefore it is valid," is still sufficient for those who accept such authorities. But in an age of inquiry, when the authority of the Bible and the Church is questioned by so many, such an appeal does not carry conviction. We may wish it otherwise, but we must face the facts and be wise enough to win men on their own terms, remembering that we are

persuaders, not soldiers, fishers of men and not mere critics. Also, if by appeal to the facts of life we can show the truths of faith to be real, we have reëstablished the authority of the Bible and the Church.

The inductive method is indispensable in teaching the genetic truths of faith, doubly so in an age when a spongy texture of mind deplores all dogma and loves disembodied ideas that float in vapory phrases in the air, binding us to nothing positive. None the less, as Plato said long ago, because "an unexamined life is unlivable," we must have a theology—building and built upon—else our faith will evaporate in a misty sentiment, or sink into a series of vagrant insights, or become a mere "boneless wonder." But it asks for a fine strategy to make such a deep truth as the Trinity real to the mind of our day, even if it be vital to our faith alike by its meaning and its mystery. If stated as sheer dogma, it wears the aspect of an arid formula, a queer mixture of mysticism, metaphysics, and mathematics, as empty as it is unreal. But if treated inductively, it is unveiled as one of the basic thought-forms of the mind of man in its attempt to interpret the life of God. In Egypt, in India, in many

lands and ages, long before our era, humanity thought of God as Father, Mother, Child, as if the life of man were a cup to be filled by the love of God. No wonder the faith which came not to destroy but to fulfill found focus in a vision of God through the family as a society in Himself, making the home an altar of faith and prophecy. And that vision is needed to-day, as never before, to make vivid the truth of the love of God, as well as a basis, both in the need of man and the nature of God, for a real social gospel.

For some time I have been discussing the matter of inductive preaching with my English friends in letters, much to my delight and profit. One of them sent me an example of an inductive sermon so admirable that I venture to pass it along. The preacher wished to make a plea for single-heartedness in the service of God, taking for his text the words of Jesus, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Had he used the old method, he would have stated the truth of the text as a proposition and gone straight to his deductions, but he would not have carried his hearers with him. Many men to-day, as all will agree, are unconvinced that such a double service is impossible. Indeed,

not a few hold that the great thing in life is precisely a skillful adjustment of the service of God and the service of the world—like the old woman who always curtseyed at the name of the devil "so as to be safe anyhow," and her family is very large. The preacher may have the tongue of an angel, but he will not win men in that way who question the truth of his text at the outset.

By the inductive approach it is different; it puts no weight on the text at first, but begins with near-by facts familiar to all, using popular illustrations. Is it not true that in factory life fatigue and weariness are common? Why? The mind is divided. On the contrary, the theater and the golf game bring the minimum of weariness, in spite of long hours. Why? The mind is not divided. In the same way, hours spent in pursuing a hobby—growing roses, say—even produces freshness of mind. Why? There is single-hearted enjoyment in the work. "Why, this is true!" is the unspoken verdict; the truth of the text is approved, not only as upon divine authority, but as a truth of experience. Having led his hearers on a tour of exploration, the preacher may now skillfully use a sense of intellectual satisfac-

tion as an opportunity to create a deep sense of spiritual dissatisfaction. Such a method seems to be the best in an age which has a peculiar bent toward discovery; and for the presentation of difficult or unpopular truth it is invaluable. It is a flank attack on the fortifications of prejudice, its most striking virtue being its element of surprise.

The method of Jesus was distinctly inductive, as we see in all his parables. He knew that men are discoverers, and not least in the things of the spirit. He really had but one text—the greatest words ever uttered upon earth, profounder than all philosophies and the fulfillment of every faith—"*God is love*"; but he never quoted it, much less assumed its truth as accepted. Instead, he began with facts from the life around him, and these were presented with exquisite art, converging upon his main thesis. A man giving his child bread, a farmer pulling his ox out of the pit, a father receiving a prodigal son home, a hen and her chicks, a wayside flower, a childish game, red sunsets, a wedding party, baking a loaf of bread—all life became at his touch an infinite parable of the truth that makes life worth living, investing these our days and years with

epic worth and wonder. It is to be noted that he always used this method in speaking to the stranger, the doubter, and the sinner, and, since he has done more good than all of us put together, it behooves us to follow his lead.

## VI

It remains to point out that the new preaching will not be content with the culture of a private piety. It will be the prophet, no less, of public religion, not only social in its insight, but international in its aspiration. Just now we are between two eras, when the old individualism has shown itself to be clearly inadequate and the wider social mind has not fully come. As Clutton-Brock said, "In two thousand years we have advanced at least to this point that, if we have any religion at all, we cannot believe in private salvation." Moreover, a man who can be content with his own salvation, or with the very idea of a private salvation, proves, by that fact, that he is not saved. If God has tied all humanity together, and science, by annihilating time and distance, has jammed it together, it must learn to live together in a world community, or perish in a human volcano. For the first time in history

the race is able either to live together as a family or destroy itself; and that is the supreme social issue before the world.

Alas, the Church in its choice between the redemption of mankind and the rescue of a few from the wreck of divine failure, gave up the greater hope for the lesser. In nothing was the divinity of Jesus more clearly revealed than in his vision of the communal redemption of all humanity, and the Church cannot be called Christian until it sees that vision, not as a vague dream to be longed for, but as the first truth of his teaching. Christianity has not failed; it is about to be discovered. In the presence of this fact, and the world issues involved, the questions that divide sect from sect are infinitesimal and insignificant. No wonder the new preaching is impatient with sectarianism, finding it intolerably petty in face of the real facts of the gospel and the world! It is not concerned to debate dead dogmas, but, rather, to poise its bright lance against the real enemies of Christ—the unutterable wickedness of war, the organized atheism of so much of our industrial order, and the stupid materialism which, to gain temporary advantage, imperils the existence, no less

than the security, of society. Against racial rancor, religious bigotry, and the horn-eyed obtuseness of blind greed, it aims its darts with the insight and passion of the prophets of old, in the name of Him in whose gospel hate is the supreme sin and love is the sovereign reality.

Much has been done—how much we need to remind ourselves, by looking back fifty years—but more remains to be done, if we are to have men and women who know how to think in terms of one humanity and one Christianity; and to that task the new preaching is dedicated, by the compulsion of its faith and the consecration of its vision. They speak to a pitiless force who hope for any kind of world coöperation until we have, in greater degree than hitherto, a world-mindedness illumined by spiritual fellowship and understanding. To that end the new preaching has taken vows to interpret the meaning of life, the facts of science, the movements of the world, in the light of the mind of Christ, as the greatest reality with which the mind of man can come in contact—the one Light that gives coherence and cohesion to an else ambiguous and unintelligible universe—that so, in the long last,

by the grace of God, our humanity may live in a frontierless and unfortified world, ruled by moral intelligence and fraternal good will. These things shall be, else Christianity is a dream too fair to have been true in the past and too frail ever to be true in the future, and we are the dupes of a divine delusion.

Truly it is a great day for the preacher, if he believes his religion, knows his age, loves it, lives in it, thinks in the rhythm of its deeper movements, speaks its dialect, feels the pathos of its quest and the thrill of its adventure. The preaching of the past was noble, stately, rich in beauty and power, in myriad keys and tones eloquent for God. The new preaching is more simple, direct, human, dipped and dyed in the color of life, more artless in its eloquence, more intimate in its appeal; but it proclaims the same gospel which, in its depth and power and richness, is equal to-day, as in all the days agone, to every mortal need and every immortal longing. May the Lord of all good life melt our hearts with love, clear our minds with the bright vision of an emancipated faith, and touch our lips with lyric fire, that we may tell the truth as it is in Jesus—shaping our sermons after the pattern shown us on the Mount.

# THE MUSIC OF PREACHING

# THE MUSIC OF PREACHING[1]

What are the sermons of the saints save the exposition and setting forth of the Holy Scriptures? It is the breaking of a loaf into pieces for distribution; as the cracking of the shell of the nut to obtain fruit. They are the channels through which it has pleased God to give us the true meaning of his word. So of the lives of the saints; what are these but practical illustrations of the gospel? The difference between the Word and the lives of the saints is like that between music in score and the same music sung by living voices.—*Francis de Sales.*

THE art of the pulpit, and it is both an art and an incarnation, is much like the art of the stage, and unlike that of the poet or the painter. It dies with the artist. Draw the picture of a great preacher how you will, something ineffable and uncapturable is lost beyond recall. There is a lost luster, the dim radiance of an incommunicable grace, of which we have a symbol in the halo about the head of the saints. Whatever his monument, he leaves a vacancy that is vacated with the passing of the generation to whom he ministered.

[1]Address in Trinity Church in Boston, at a service in memory of Phillips Brooks, the third Sunday in Advent, 1928.

All the more reason, then, why we should remember his genius and service, that as little as possible may be lost of the precious treasure of mankind.

If this is true of all great preachers in some degree, it is particularly true of Phillips Brooks, whose ideal of preaching was the communication of truth through personality, of which his own ministry was a supreme example. Here he stood, his huge figure made incandescent by a kind of spiritual electricity, pouring out the power, the passion, the pathos of his spirit, now in rapt soliloquy, now in rapid appeal—"the sermon was all one sentence," said David Swing—telling not his opinions, but his experiences, speaking to a multitude with the utmost spiritual intimacy about God and the soul, about life and duty and love and death; a voice of such magic telling tidings of such moment that they who heard entreated that it might speak to them forever. It was a marvel and a mystery, a ministry which filled the whole Church, of every name and rite, with a radiance that still lingers.

To-day, we of a generation who never saw the face of Phillips Brooks—his great dark eyes which were the homes of silent prayer—and

never heard his voice study the story of his life with amazement. When we read his sermons, so exquisite in artistry, so rich in varied insight, and then turn to the ecstatic words which grave and wise men used to describe the spell which the preacher cast over their minds and hearts—"his eloquence affected me physically," said Bishop Brent, in writing of his early days—our wonder deepens; as it does when we read the sermons of Wesley, and then follow the reports of how they stirred men as the wind stirs the clouds. There is a hiatus which we cannot bridge between the sermons and the wonder which they wrought; and if we see the figure of the preacher more clearly in the perspective of time and distance, and may perhaps estimate him more accurately, we are none the less aware of a great loss which makes us wistful.

What if the picture of Phillips Brooks by those who were near him be bathed in the rose-glow of their highest emotions, and wrapped in a glamour which makes him indistinct—that is just his glory; that he evoked such emotions in men and women, and even little children, and made them, for a brief time, better than themselves. It was indeed the revelation of

truth through personality, the touch of soul upon soul, at once subduing and exalting and never to be forgotten, a wonder for which words were never made; and that is why, when men speak of Phillips Brooks to-day, and tell stories about him, one sees a light in their eyes and realizes what a great reverence really is.

## I

Who, then, was Phillips Brooks, who came as near as anyone may ever hope to arrive at a fulfillment of the ideal of a Christian minister and his august opportunity? Wherein lay the uniqueness of his power, so far as it can be defined, and what is his rank in the hierarchy and tradition of the pulpit? To say that he was a great preacher is indeed true, but it tells us very little, unless we can delimit his genius, for great preachers are of many kinds; chiefly of three kinds, to name no others, each in its own distinction and power of inexpressible preciousness to the Church. It is worth while to indicate such types and ranks, though in some men they often overlap and intermingle, lest our sense of values be blurred in the blinding radiance of one kind of preacher who alone seems great to the multitude whose assent and

homage and devotion he commands. If there is one spirit, we must not forget that there are different gifts, one incomplete without the others, and each a glory of the pulpit.

There is the poetic seer, more often either small or frail of physique, and by the very fragility of his incarnation revealing a white light; such a man as Emerson, whose essays were the distilled essence of innumerable Puritan sermons, the riddle of Samson having repeated itself in the history of that mighty faith. Emerson was a preacher to the end, though he left the pulpit, whose eloquence, devoid of intense expression, is a serene music of the mind, and whose words go further and live longer than any highly wrought oratory. An example in our own time was Samuel Tipple, who stood in a tiny church in Upper Norwood in London, where such men as Gladstone were wont to worship, and whom Ruskin called "the greatest master of pulpit prose." Here, no less, in a different way, is the secret of the silvery speech of Newman, ascetic and austere, which still searches us like a white flame; and the golden voice of Robertson, which echoes in our hearts—men whose words have a freshness as if they had been

spoken yesterday. This preacher is no orator in the ordinary sense, and he can never be popular except with a few, but he is a precious gift of God.

Then there is the genetic thinker, the spiritual miner who digs deep and brings new ore to the surface, adding a new dimension to the doctrine of the Church, or a new defense to the basic faith of humanity; men like Bushnell and Martineau. No one can ever again ponder the mystery of the cross, and its unveiling of meaning and mystery, without meeting Bushnell and being enriched by his vision, even though his theory is inadequate, as all theories must be. In the same way, Martineau defended the moral mysticism of man in the face of the mud gods of his day with a wealth of thought only equaled by his witchery of style. Such a preacher is not followed by crowds, but he prevails mightily by the depth and vitality of his ideas, by the intensity and clarity of his vision of God, no less than by the beauty which he invokes to glorify his vocation. He influences men deeply, and he remains a fertilizing power long after he passes away. At least our admiration for Spurgeon and Joseph Parker must not blind us to the right

of Maurice and Munger to an equal honor in the tradition of the pulpit.

It was to a third order of the prophets that Phillips Brooks belonged, to the service to which he brought a wonderful winsomeness both of body and soul. No system bears his name; no new depth of doctrine takes date from his life. He was neither a creative thinker like Bushnell, nor a philosopher like Martineau; he was the orator, the master of assemblies, the God-illumined commander and shepherd of multitudes of souls. In the empire of faith he was a Great Commoner—if, indeed, we may not say that he was the Common Denominator of religion in his generation—by nature a dealer in the most universal of ideas, standing at the point where all sects met. If he had affinities with the poet and the seer, he chose to let the artist in him prevail, to do his thinking in the forms and colors of the imagination, seeking to give the truth of faith a body worthy of its beauty. One may make an analogy between the poet and the preacher, who are akin, provided we remember that the preacher must never be wholly a poet, and the poet must never be a preacher at all; and the result is after this manner—

If David Swing was an old Greek philosopher, more a sage than a seer, who wandered out of the world of ancient dream into the new, uprising Chicago; if Beecher was like Shakespeare in the prodigal fertility of his resources, the easy mastery of his powers, and the wealth of his fancy which gathered into its vast net all the bewildering imagery of his country and his age; if Alexander Maclaren was the Lord Tennyson of the Church, alike for the stately grace and finish of his art and his sweet-toned pathos; then Phillips Brooks was the Robert Browning of the pulpit, passionate in his humanism, rich, tender, enchanting of personality, uniting a Greek subtlety with a Hindu swiftness of mind, victorious in his vision of God in Christ, at once an artist and a mystic; as a man of the spirit supreme among us, incomparable as a preacher, indefatigable as a pastor, blending the two offices as no one else has ever done in our history—a preacher whose life is both a legacy and a legend of what he himself called "the music of preaching."

## II

To tell the story of Phillips Brooks would be a work of supererogation, and yet the making

of the man was as much a marvel as the man himself. Against the background of old New England, a clean-spirited, practical father and a high-souled, rapturously religious mother gave him birth. In no wise outstanding as a student, after an ill-starred experience as a teacher, by unforeseen ways he found himself, as if by accident, in a theological school, where there was one inspiring teacher, but little else to awaken a student of divinity, but not yet even a member of the Church, so uncertain was he of his way. For three years he had his own way largely, and it was a way of reading, as amazing in its bulk as it was wide in its range, when he sought to make the best that man had thought and done and dreamed his own.

As if by instinct, it was by human interest—the stuff of which his life was made—that his studies were dominated, and that gives us the key to his ministry. He read, he pondered, he brooded, he sought for insight, trying to think clearly and justly the great thoughts of humanity, the better to understand our race in order to serve its needs in the higher reaches of its life. While not indifferent to science, he was most at home in philosophy, but most of

all at home in the field of life. For him human interest was divine interest too, and if his early reading had to do with life, his reflection—as we see from the notebooks which he kept from first to last—weighed the issues of God and the soul; issues which rise together and must be solved together, if ever they are solved at all. All valid thought must deal with both, and all triumphant thought must deal with them in fellowship, if reality is to become real. Such were the aims and choices of Brooks, and such was his consecration by which he became first a student, then a lover, and always a servant of the soul of man in its faith in and its fellowship with God.

Yet no one can point to a single shining day, or a lovely luminous hour, when the scattered rays of insight were fused into a glow-point of all-transfiguring vision, as in the lives of Tauler, Wesley, Beecher, and so many others. No doubt there was such a day or hour, but no one ever heard a word about it. He was so shy as to the facts of his inner life, speaking of the awful intimacies of the life of the spirit in an impersonal way, albeit with such faith and fire that men heard their own souls speak to them in his words. One who stood near him

said that he could get just so close to Phillips Brooks, then a door closed, and he heard the click of the lock. He could not open the door from the outside, and Brooks was unable to open it from the inside. The only time that innermost door opened wide was in the pulpit; such is the mystery of preaching—a man can speak to a multitude of matters too intimate to mention to a friend, save in the rarest hour of fellowship. At any rate, if no one hour can be indicated, there was a year when a clearer light from a deeper sky seemed to fall upon his diary, and he emerged from his student years erect and happy, having struck his stride in the path marked out for his soul—a preacher of Christ.

A man of the city, never happy for long in the country, to whom nature was circumference and humanity the center—in his travels more fascinated by architecture than by mountains—Phillips Brooks lived in a crowd, loved the crowd; and it was in accord with the fitness of things that his work should be done in two great cities, Philadelphia and Boston. In both ministries he gave himself without reserve, spending of his power without stint, incredibly accessible to such as he could serve,

and in the two cities of his love his interest took two forms. If in Philadelphia he was active as a reformer, in Boston he devoted all his vitality and vision to the religious life. During his Philadelphia ministry the Civil War was fought and won, through blood and fire and tears. He gave his witness against slavery; he rejoiced when it vanished; and God gave him the vision to see Lincoln—so appallingly misunderstood in his generation—for what he was before he ascended in a chariot of tragedy. What the preacher said about the President then all the world agrees to say to-day—but Phillips Brooks said it first and in a manner well-nigh perfect.

Even to this day his ministry is a fragrance and a radiance in Philadelphia, a part of the spiritual treasure and historic legend of the city. There he stood, a towering figure finely formed, pouring out a torrential eloquence, moving men profoundly, but himself apparently unmoved, yet so electrifying, so magnetically dominating, so mystically illuminating that men went out of the church as if walking on air, leaving their sorrows and taking a new courage and a new confidence away. He was the artist-preacher in those years, preaching

sermons of the noblest form, bringing the enchantment of beauty to the service of his growing and deepening faith. It was in our City of Brotherly Love that his Christmas hymn was written, a thing done just in passing —extempore, so to speak—which will still be singing when the music of most of his sermons has ceased. To the end many ties bound him to Philadelphia; he was even elected Bishop of Pennsylvania, but declined the honor.

## III

What can one say of the great years in Boston, except that for once Phillips Brooks reversed the proverb that a prophet is not without honor save in his own country? He was entering his thrilling mid-career, in the prime and flower of his power, when Trinity Church was built, and its pulpit became a throne of vision and power, whence winged words of comfort and command were spoken to a multitude no man can number. Only some great angel could trace the influence of such a ministry and tell its real story—written in hearts healed of deep hurts, in faith renewed and fortified, in lives lifted into the higher air of God. How rich the notebooks, how happy

the letters, how radiant the sermons of those years, and what a rosary of friendships. In the wake of the Civil War a new scientific materialism appeared, and the agnosticism of Huxley, whose descendants are now expounding its logical result in futilitarianism and the glittering gospel of cocktails and kisses. Religion, so long a passion and a promise, became a problem, as it is with so many in our day. With these deeper, darker issues of doubt the pastor and preacher had now to deal, in his own heart and in the hearts and minds of his people.

If, henceforth, Phillips Brooks ceased to be a reformer and became more and more the mystic, it was in answer to a deep need, in answer to unasked questions in many a mind. With single-hearted devotion he gave himself wholly to the religious life, his sole aim being to quicken and deepen the life of man in God, to suffuse all human fellowships with the glow and glory of the vision of God in Jesus. What a picture to hang up in the heart—Phillips Brooks reading Schopenhauer, the petulant pessimist, looking over the edge of the boat into the black and swirling waters, pondering the awful alternatives of faith; and as the doubt of the age deepened, by the grace of God he

dropped a plummet of faith still deeper. He faced the bitter fact and grappled with it, fighting the battle of faith not only for himself, but, like Greatheart, that he might be a helper of others less heroic or robust, in the dim recesses of Trinity Church, in Harvard University, and in far places where his voice echoed; and he won the victory.

How did the preacher win his victory, and by what clue did he find a way for himself and others out of the labyrinth and confusion of his age? He won it in and through Christ, as we can win it to-day, and as the men of other and later generations may win it, whatever the tangle of their times. It was in his vision—nay, his experience—of the Godlikeness of Christ, which in turn became the Christlikeness of God, and he triumphed, as witness his lectures on "The Influence of Jesus." It was because Christ had been taken out of religion in that day, as to-day, that so many lost their way in the dark. It was the glory of Phillips Brooks that he brought Christ back to men and women, not simply as an idea, still less as an ideal, but as an incarnation so real, so richly human and winsome withal, so strong and joyous, that men found Jesus anew in the city

of Channing and Parker. They saw, illumined by the vision of the preacher, that Christ is Christianity, that his personality is its very essence, and that in his fellowship in the service of human need its faith becomes not merely a philosophy, but a flower and a flame. The greatest Christ-preacher of his generation, it is no wonder that a supreme artist, trying to interpret his secret, has shown us another Figure by his side—as on the road to Emmaus.[1] Albeit, alas, in a manner to horrify the preacher had he seen it, putting the servant ahead of the Master!

So Phillips Brooks moved toward a climax, as his life unfolded and his faith ripened to fruition. Up to the highest life of man his zeal and faith and service ascended until, in those serene and radiant later years, he became for a multitude not simply a servant of God, but, in a unique sense, a symbol of God, whether in the freedom of the street, or in the careless ease of travel, no less than in the pulpit. He lived in religion, found in it his joy and the full

[1]The reference, of course, is to the Saint Gaudens Memorial of Phillips Brooks, just outside Trinity Church, facing Copley Square, showing the preacher in an attitude of characteristic appeal, and a hooded figure of Christ a little behind, his hand upon the shoulder of his messenger.

flowering of his ample powers. Men felt that to him God was the one certain and supreme reality, and that God in Christ was the meaning and music of his life. All through his ministry his keywords had been God, Christ, the Soul, Personality, Love, Life, but toward the end Life became the one word that told all; religion and life became one. In those years he was wont to say that he had only one text and one sermon, and the text was, "I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly"; and when he went away—softly, suddenly—men of all faiths, and men of no faith, if such there be, felt that life itself had been enlarged, enriched, and ennobled because his great soul had passed through it.

## IV

What of to-day and to-morrow? Is the Christ-faith and fellowship, such as glorified the ministry of Phillips Brooks, valid for to-day? Is it trustworthy, and can it be triumphant, in a new universe, where distances are estimated by light-year measurements, and when matter itself has become a mystery, melting into whirling energy or ether? Is such a faith, at once so simple and so sublime, still

true amid the devastating cleverness of a pragmatic, behavioristic, utilitarian fashion of thinking, when relativity seems to have upset even the law of gravitation? Indeed, yes; because it reaches down to the roots of life—down below a garish logic and a glib intellectualism, as deep as love and death—and lays hold of that in God and in the soul of man by which we know reality and are made real. Facing the worst, it finds the best—finds immortal meaning in our brief, broken, mortal years, spiritual purpose in an else bewildering universe, and the prophecy of a mercy that endureth forever. Nay, more; it finds in the faith and fellowship of Christ, in the mystery of his cross, a way of triumph amid all the black tragedies of earth, lifting our fleeting life into the rhythm and radiance of an Eternal Life.

By these realities Phillips Brooks lived, his character at once an incarnation and an exposition of the teaching of his words; and thus a golden-hearted preacher becomes a proof of his own gospel and a prophecy of the abundant life. He lived for Christ until Christ lived in him, confirming the reality of God, the fellowship of Jesus, the preciousness of the soul, and

the life that shall endless be. Such men are the children of the Church, born out of her deep heart, keepers of her faith and heralds of her gospel—self-spending sons of light and power and pathos whom God gives us for the comfort and consecration of humanity and the leadership of faith.

To Florence God gave Savonarola, a flaming apocalyptic genius; to Brighton by the Sea, Robertson; to London, a Spurgeon, a Parker, a Liddon, a whole dynasty of spiritual seers; to Chicago the gentle, meditative David Swing, a mighty preacher of beauty; to Brooklyn a Beecher, whose voice was like an orchestra—an evangelist, a philanthropist, and a statesman all in one, and each in full measure—to each city according to its measure of need; and to Boston, by his extraordinary mercy God gave the radiant, and rejoicing soul of Phillips Brooks—

> *For the perfecting of the saints, for work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*

MY MASTER

# MY MASTER

Jesus comes to us as one unknown, as of old, by the lakeside, he came to those men who knew him not. He speaks to us the same word, "Follow me," and sets us to the tasks which he has to fulfill for our time. He commands. And to those who obey him, whether they be wise or simple, he will reveal himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in his fellowship; and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience who he is.—*Albert Schweistzer.*

It is said of George Herbert that he used in ordinary speech, when he made mention of the name of Jesus, to add in an undertone, "My Master." It was a simple habit of his heart; yet the tone of his voice when he uttered the words, as he often did, softly and shyly, betrayed the secret of his life and the hidden spring of his joy. Men loved to hear him say it, knowing from the light in his eyes that his whole life was bound up in love of Jesus and loyalty to him. As the years went on his spirit seemed to bear ever sweeter and juicier fruits of goodness, grown by sunnier walls of faith, and his life had in it a nameless and clinging charm.

How vividly I recall a ride from Salisbury to Bremerton to see the tiny chapel in which Herbert ministered, and the vicarage adjoining it, where he wrote his poems while the birds nested in the eaves. The vicarage is much the same as after the poet-preacher rebuilt it, except for one or two recent touches. Above the doorway on a tablet are the words he put in the chimney-mantel in the hall when the house was finished:

"If thou chance for to find
A new house for thy mind,
And built without thy cost;
Be good to the poor,
As God gives thee store,
And then my labor's not lost."

As I closed the door of the little vicarage—sacred to the memory of a quiet ministry—my heart was full, thinking of the long line of country pastors who are seldom heard of, whose names are justly revered among men, but whose acts are known only to God.

The chapel itself, into which one might perhaps crowd seventy people, is in good repair and in daily use. The body of Herbert rests under the chancel, but without any inscription: in the north wall is a small cross with his initials—"G. H."—and the date of his death,

1632. From so small a place and from a ministry of only three gentle years has such an influence gone forth—a fame still fragrant, though three hundred years have fled. Not to his sermons, nor yet to his life of love among the poor, does he owe his fame, but to a golden little book of poetry, "The Temple"—precious alike for its insight and its art—in which he told in song the story of his heart and his victory over early death. The life of Herbert, by Izaak Walton, the fisherman, was written, he tells us, to praise his friend and to please himself. It is as clear and musical as the spirit of the preacher, who used to walk twice a week into Salisbury to be present at an Evensong—many stories are told of his walks to and fro. The Cathedral and its music exalted his soul and was his heaven on earth: his faith was winged with poetry. He did not simply preach religion; he lived it. So beloved was he that, when the bell rang for the hour of prayer, men at the plow would stop in the field and offer their prayer with him and for him. Toward the end of his life he wrote these simple lines:

"How sweetly doth My Master sound! My Master!
As ambergris leaves a rich scent unto the taster:
So do these words a sweeter content,

An Oriental fragrance—My Master!
'My Master,' shall I speak? O that unto Thee
'My Servant' were a little so!"

Many preachers have had no other kind of faith save that taught by tradition or learned from a book. Examples are frequent in pulpit biography of men who have preached for years before they had a faith they could rightly call their own. Wesley is a case in point; Dale another. No one can forget that chapter in the life of Bushnell in which it is related how, after years of ministry, he woke up one morning saying that he had "seen the gospel" for the first time. Not until then had he realized, apparently, that Christian faith is not assent to dogma, but the "trusting of one's being to a Being, there to be rested, kept, guided, molded, governed, and possessed forever." What was a flash of insight in Bushnell was a process going on in the life of Simon Peter, softening all that was hard and hardening all that was soft, as he lived in contact with Jesus. His confession of the divinity of Christ was not the result of argument, but of fellowship in which he was wrought into another man. He had given himself utterly to Jesus, having forsaken all to follow him in Galilee and Judea. Always

impulsive, often rebuked, he followed the Master, love of whom was the one fixed star in his otherwise uncertain heaven; and his faith was the fruit of his life. Only as faith authenticates itself in character, in the agony and bloody sweat of the moral struggle, does it become real and revealing; else it is only hearsay.

What we learn by living, what shows itself to be real in the hard trials of the years, that we can lay to heart and trust. When the scribes tried to persuade the man born blind that Jesus was not the Christ, but a sinner, he replied: "Whether he is a sinner, I know not; one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." Often what we refuse to believe, or cannot believe, as an intellectual proposition, is thrust upon us with an overwhelming conviction by some terrific or blessed experience. Always it is in experience that we really learn who Jesus is. Look into the lives of those who have known and served him best, and you will see that their faith is the result, not of reasoned argument, but of vital contacts with his spirit and his truth. Indeed, not a few men of saintly character and unchallenged faith have remained intellectually uncertain to the end. "Rabbi" Duncan, of Edinburgh—not really

a rabbi, but a teacher of preachers—called himself to the last an intellectual skeptic. Life had for him on one side a precipice, down to the abysses, but on the other side his feet were on a rock; and that rock was experience. It is still a matter of debate as to whether Newman was not in intellect a skeptic, as in heart he was a mystic—a strange, fear-haunted, "God-bedazzled" mind.

For my own part, it becomes every year more difficult to place Christ intellectually, and increasingly impossible to do without him practically. I have read many books of theology, from Augustine to our own day, following the winding paths of their speculations. I know the creeds, in which Christian doctrine has been formulated, and the writings of the great skeptics showing the alternative of faith. I have followed the investigations—and even the guesses—of the critics, high and low, learning much from their labors. I have read Strauss, the Gnostic of his age, in whose mind all things turned to myth, allegory, and symbol. I love Renan for his charm of style, and because his "Life of Jesus"—written on the mud floor of a Syrian hut—reproduces the vibrating air of the East and the human per-

sonality of the Master. I know and revere Emerson, whose Christ is the Ideal; a personification, not an incarnation. I am familiar with the agnostics, from Huxley to Lord Morley; and those beautiful, baffled souls like Lord Courtney and Middleton Murry, who can neither escape Jesus nor make up their minds about him. Deists, pantheists, occultists, the disciples of Comte, seers from the East like Ghandi and Tagore, saints, mystics, poets, prophets, the teachers of the old orthodoxy and the new, liberals of every line of thought; they tell me many things of interest and value—but none of them, nor all of them together, tell what Jesus is to me. Nor can I, because, as life depends, he means more and yet more, as inescapable as he is unfathomable.

To me Jesus is such an unveiling of God as I have found in no other, to which no philosophy has ever attained, and one which satisfies my intellect and wins my heart utterly. That is why, in all the great hours of life, he seems to draw near, as of old, when the door was shut for fear, or by the lakeside at dawn. That is why, when I study history deeply, I see his Figure moving through its tumult and tragedy —because the force that is behind history and

the force that is in Jesus are one. Often I question the creeds of the Church—august symbols of historic faith—but when I come to Jesus with great questions, suddenly a silence falls upon me, and I know that he is questioning me; and the questions he asks are so much deeper and keener than those I ask him that I am hushed. When I sit down to study Shakespeare, his mental habit and the magic of his art, Shakespeare knows nothing about me. I am a solitary student engaged in a solitary quest. The man I study is not with me save in the record of his thought and cannot purposefully and consciously help me. When I study Jesus, it is not so. Always I have the feeling that he sees me, hears me, knows me. Study becomes communion, and as I walk with him in the days of his flesh, he walks with me in a new and strange age. My only ambition is to know him, whose I am and whom I preach, and to be his humble disciple in the midst of the years—until I hie away in the falling daylight.

Here my story always comes to an end, because there are no words to tell more. One thing I do know, if I am tempted to the cynicism to which every man is exposed—doubly

so after his fortieth year—and turn to the Life of Jesus, I am not only rebuked, but healed, and my hardness is melted into prayer. When I am sorely tempted, when I have suffered moral defeat, when I am beshadowed by blind thoughts I know not nor can name, it is Jesus who redeems me and helps me to try again and fight the issues of character through to something like decency. When the vision of him is before me in his haunting moral loveliness, I can begin to see at least the hint of a meaning in the turbid ebb and flow of human misery around me; although it be only a glimpse, only the vague shape of a reason that floats in my heart and melts as quickly away, like an echo afar of an all-sustaining melody underflowing the discord and tumult of time. Yet, through him, I do have hope of a fair, far time when sorrow and sin shall cease, and the soul of man shall be free, and humanity shall live together in a Beloved Community. In short, he reveals God to me as no other—all of God that I can know, or need to know—and when I look out upon the universe, now lucid and luminous, now dark and terrible, and wonder what God is, it always comes back to my thinking of Jesus infinitely enlarged in every

way. Taught by him, I am learning to see God the Father everywhere, in everything, loving all, hearing all, forgetting none, working with all, within all, through all, fulfilling his purpose of creative good will; and I pray that the vision may grow and abide till death hangs his sickle on my garden gate.

For me, then, Jesus is not a theory in theology, but a living Reality, the meaning of which we have not dreamed, much less measured, and it is no wonder to me that many minds see him from many angles. The fact is that a personality so manifold, so universal, so creative, so revealing, cannot be understood in its fullness, even by those who find in it more than enough for their needs. When men look at Christ they see only a small arc of his everlastingness, and measure him, as they needs must, by their highest ideal. Thus Edmund Spencer saw in him the very type of a fair and excellent Ruler, who overcame what was distempered and restored "sober government" to our lives. Byron, on the other hand, thought of him as the Emancipator and chief Iconoclast—a Radiant Rebel. Sir Philip Sidney saw him as one in whom moral restraint and human freedom found their most perfect

equipoise. Shelley would have us think that Jesus was remarkable above all else for defying the customs and tenets of his day, while Napoleon wondered that "there is never any hesitation in his commands." Renan, as has been said, chiefly discerns the exquisite in Jesus, Papini feels his loneliness, and Milton beholds the militant Saint, the Captain of the armies of God.

Some regard Jesus as the font of symbolic, mystic, and sacramental truth; others as the pattern of an awful simplicity. Thus the naturalist and the spiritualist, the Quaker and the soldier, Tolstoi and Charlemagne, St. Francis and Stuart Mill, socialist and anarchist, ritualist and rationalist, ascetic anchorite and genial comrade, each thinks that he has found the salient trait in the life of Jesus. To the active man, he is the most active of men; to the contemplative, the most contemplative. To the sinner he is a Saviour; to the seeker after truth, a Teacher. Amid such bewildering cross-readings and contradictions we may well stand confused, asking ourselves if any real personality can correspond to so many insights and estimates. Yet, since each man does find in Christ the counterpart of his own

highest nature, and the realization of his ideal, as practical men we have here a hint of a Reality in the presence of which all are one alike in our littleness and our wistful need. What Jesus means to us, what we see in him of the true and everlasting, is our point of contact with him, and our clue to such understanding of him as we may attain to in the midst of the years. Now we can the better understand what Savonarola meant in his prison meditation of the fifty-first Psalm, and rejoice that the City of God has many gates:

> Then shall I teach Thy ways unto the wicked, not one way only, but many ways, for Thy precepts are many; yet all these ways of Thine end in one. They all end in love, which so unites the souls of faithful men that the Lord gives them to have one heart and one life. Yet surely there are different ways, different lives. By one way the clergy go, by another the monks. One way lies for the married, another for the virgins. By one way the princes walk, and the doctors by another, and in a word, all separate orders of men proceed by different ways to the Heavenly Father. "Then shall I teach sinners Thy ways," each according to his condition and his capacity, and "the wicked shall turn unto Thee," for I will preach unto them not myself, but Christ crucified.

Such a vision of Christ, unfolding and deepening with the years, will lead us still further

if we have the daring to follow it. Since each type of mind and character finds in Christ not only its ideal, but its interpretation and satisfaction, the old Delphic wisdom, "Know thyself," has not perished, but has been merged into the practical, personal question, "What think ye of Christ?" Therefore, if we would know ourselves, the meaning and prophecy of our lives, we must begin by studying Christ, taking his yoke upon us and learning of him, as he invites us to do, rather than turning our eyes inward and brooding over our imperfections. Such a study will not only show us somewhat of the beauty of Christ, but it will also reveal what we are and are to be—giving us a measure and standard of our growth in spiritual capacity—the while it unveils a glimpse of a Reality which does not change with the accidents of outward life and the caprices of time; a Personality which will become "our universe that feels and knows." Aye, perhaps we shall be permitted a foregleam of our own Eternal Life, which we hardly yet know that we possess, still less how it will realize itself amid the trials and struggles of our days.

Thus the truth as it is in Jesus is not a propo-

sition of philosophy, but a matter vitally and urgently practical, if we would know who and what we are. Time was when men drew two circles with the rims touching—one was God, the other man: if Jesus was in one, he could not be in the other. But to-day we see that those circles overlap, since in God we live and move and have our being, and that Jesus is in both—as we are potentially—showing us equally the divine life of man and "the human life of God." For, if there is that in us to which Jesus appeals, bringing a wonderful warmth and winsomeness into our hearts, at once familiar and strange, it is because there is somewhat in us akin to him, however far he may tower above us. Here is a challenge to adventure the most thrilling man ever essayed, and the depth and richness of our experience will depend on the depth and daring of our faith. Faith is the pathfinder that strikes out a path in the wilderness, the star that leads through the night; and reason is faith finding and interpreting itself. If we take our fleeting life in this heroic way, not "flesh and blood," but our Father in heaven, will reveal to us the meaning of life in Christ and its infinite opportunity.

To each his experience and its interpretation; but to me the greatest discovery of our generation is neither radio nor radium, but the fact that Jesus is actually the Way, the Truth, and the Life for our humanity in its climb to God. In the midst of much that is uncertain, it is made plain even by our tragedy that Jesus knows the secret and holds in his pierced hands the key to what the world needs to know and is ever seeking without finding. Our only hope is in Christ—still the outcast Christ, despised and rejected of men—not the Christ of our subtle creeds, but the Christ of our bitter need, the Comrade of men, women, and little children; no wraith of a far-off faith, but a Companion who "sorrows with indomitable eyes for his maltreated plan," yet still hoping all things, believing all things, even while he endures all things. He it is whom our humanity, made wiser by its folly and nobler by its suffering, will yet crown without a thorn; and to be a humble preacher of his gospel is reason enough, joy enough, for one mortal life, whether long or short, as Herbert learned long ago.

# NEEDS OF FAITH

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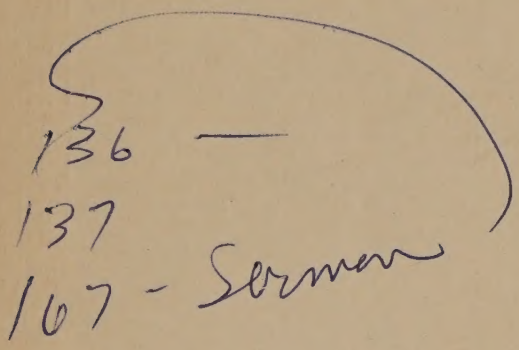
1. FOCUS
2. FULFILLMENT
3. FELLOWSHIP

ALL IN THE PERSON OF JESUS!!



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